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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

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VOL. II

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

WILLIAM EDWARD HARTPOLE LECKY

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VOLUME II.

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HISTORY OF IRELAND

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER III.

1760–1778.

THE first years of the reign of George III. are memorable in the economical and moral history of Ireland, as having witnessed the rise of that Whiteboy movement which may be justly regarded as at once the precursor and the parent of all subsequent outbursts of Irish agrarian crime. Its chief causes are to be found in the rapid conversion of arable into pasture land which has been already described.[1] In addition to the more permanent causes which were then enumerated, the movement had been greatly accelerated by a murrain which had broken out in 1739 among the horned cattle of Holstein, had spread rapidly to other parts of Germany, and had at length extended to Holland and England.[2] The price of cattle was enormously raised. In 1758 their free importation into Great Britain for the space

[1] See vol. i. pp. 219–226.

[2] Crawford's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 316, 317.

of five years was permitted.[1] Whole baronies were turned into pasture land. Common lands, which alone enabled the overburdened cottier to subsist, and which had long been tacitly, if not expressly, open to him, were everywhere invaded, and the country was full of a starving peasantry turned out of their wretched cottages to make room for a more lucrative industry. Their misery can scarcely be exaggerated, and it was mixed with a strong sense of injustice. In the almost complete absence of manufacturing industry the great majority of the people were wholly dependent on the soil. In a country where poverty was perhaps as extreme as in any part of Europe there was no poor-law. The greater landlords were commonly absentees. The keen competition for the soil, and the constant practice of subletting, had reduced the immediate cultivators to such abject poverty that the most transient calamity brought them face to face with starvation. As Catholics and as tenants they were completely unrepresented in the great council of the nation. The law of 1727, which provided that, out of every 100 acres, not less than five should be under cultivation,[2] was, in the words of a very competent witness, 'as dead as the letters of it, for all the rich were delinquents, and none but the impotent poor were left to enforce the performance of it.'[3] The local magistracy planted in the midst of a Catholic tenantry were in quiet times almost omnipotent, and they consisted exclusively of Protestant landlords.

It is not surprising that such a condition should

[1] Macpherson's *Hist. of Commerce*, iii. 311.

[2] Geo. II. c. 10.

[3] Campbell's *Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland*, p. 155. Among the Irish papers at the English Record Office there is one sent from Ireland, April 16, 1774, enumerating the different Acts that had been passed relating to Irish tillage. To 1 Geo. II. c. 10, the following note is appended: 'This law, though a perpetual one, has never been observed nor attended to in a single instance.'

have at length produced an insurrection of despair. The country, it is true, was, on the whole, improving. It was stated by Arthur Young that in the twenty-five years preceding 1778 the rent of land had at least doubled.[1] The growth of the chief towns, the mulipli-cation of roads, plantations, country seats, and public buildings attested the accumulation of considerable wealth; the influence of a middle class may for the first time be detected in Irish politics, and the larger tenants and shopkeepers, and especially those who were connected with the victualling trade, were rising rapidly in pro-sperity. But there was a large section of the population by whom that prosperity was never felt,[2] whose condi-

[1] Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 350. According to an-other writer: 'There were in re-membrance of many of us but two sorts of people in this king-dom. There is now a middling people grown out of trade and manufactures . . . . the price of land is to a tenant risen within the time I write about, every-where double, in many places more. The taste for building, planting, and laying down ground, diffuses itself surprisingly.'—*Previous Promises inconsistent with a free Parliament* (Dublin, 1760), p. 32.

[2] 'We have in this country three classes of peasantry, which, taken together, make at least half of its inhabitants, a great part of them are at present both miserable and useless in the highest degree. (1) Cotters, per-sons who hold at will a small take of land, seldom more than an acre, and grass for a couple of cows, at an exorbitant rent, which they work out at the small wages of 5*d.* or 4*d.* a day without diet. (2) Persons who have short leases, or leases of uncertain tenure at high rents, particularly the tenants of Church lands and glebes. (3) The inhabitants in the neighbourhood of towns or villages who hold no land and are supported by daily labour. Each of these classes is poor beyond all example in other countries.—*Proposal for Employing Chil-dren, &c.*, addressed to the Dublin Society by Sir James Caldwell (1771). There is much conflict of testimony about the rate of wages. Crawford, who published his history of Ireland in 1782, speaks of 'the small price given for labour which, notwithstand-ing the increased price of neces-saries, did not exceed the wages in the days of Elizabeth.'—*Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 317. Arthur Young calculated that the average agri-cultural wages for all the year round from 1776 to 1779 were 6½*d.* a day, and that they had risen 1¾*d.* or nearly one-fourth in

tion was little, if at all, better than in the time of Swift, whose means of subsistence were with the growth of pasture steadily contracting, and to whose almost hopeless wretchedness the most competent witnesses are agreed in ascribing the Whiteboy organisation. Chesterfield, who knew Ireland well, said that they 'were used worse than negroes by their lords and masters, and their deputies of deputies of deputies,' and he ascribed Whiteboyism to 'the sentiment in every human breast that asserts man's natural right to liberty and good usage, and that will and ought to rebel when oppressed and provoked to a certain degree.[1] An English traveller named Bush, who visited Ireland in 1764, gives a graphic description of the extreme misery which accompanied the Whiteboy disturbances. He says: 'What dread of justice or punishment can be expected from an Irish peasant in a state of wretchedness and extreme penury, in which if the first man that should meet him were to knock him on the head and give him an everlasting relief from his distressed and penurious life, he might have reason to think it a friendly and meritorious action; and that so many of them bear their distressed, abject state with patience is to me a sufficient proof of the natural civility of their disposition.'[2] More than twenty years later the Irish Attorney-General, Fitzgibbon, who was very little addicted to taking an indulgent view of his countrymen, used language which was at least as emphatic. 'I am very well acquainted with the province of Munster,' he said, 'and I know

twenty years. In his tour through the eastern counties of England he found the rise of labour had been one-fourth in eighteen years. He noticed the curious fact that, while common labour in Ireland was little more than one-third of what it was in England, the artisans were paid nearly, if not quite as much as in that kingdom.—*Tour in Ireland*, ii. 125, 126.

[1] *Letters*, v. 463.

[2] Bush's *Hibernia Curiosa*, p. 33.

that it is impossible for human wretchedness to exceed that of the miserable peasantry in that province. I know that the unhappy tenantry are ground to powder by relentless landlords.' 'It is impossible for them any longer to exist in the extreme wretchedness under which they labour. A poor man is obliged to pay 6*l.* for an acre of potatoes, which 6*l.* he is obliged to work out with his landlord at 5*d.* a day.' In a subsequent speech he declared that 'the lower order of the people of Munster are in a state of oppression, abject poverty, sloth, dirt, and misery not to be equalled in any other part of the world.' He ascribed it 'in the first place to their own indolence, and in the next to a class of men called middlemen, a set of gentry who, having no inheritance, no education, no profession, or other means of life than by getting between the inheritor and the cultivator of the soil, grind the poor people to powder.'[1]

It is essential, indeed, in considering the economical condition of Ireland in the last century to bear steadily

[1] *Irish Parl. Debates*, vii. 58, 63, 343 (1787). Sir Hercules Langrishe, a very distinguished member of the Irish Parliament, wrote: 'The common people of England generally feed on wheaten bread, butter, cheese, bacon and beer; whereas in Ireland the northern people live on oaten bread and milk; those of the south and west universally on potatoes, to which scarcely any of them aspire to add milk the *whole year round*; but really and truly (however improbable it may be to an Englishman) do frequently support themselves by nothing but potatoes and water. . . . The labourer's wages throughout Ireland are as universally 6*d.* a day as in England 1*s.* The medium price of corn is most certainly not above one-twentieth higher in England than Ireland.'—*Considerations on the Dependencies of Great Britain* (Anon., Lond. 1769), p. 16. 'The general rise of lands in this kingdom,' said another writer, 'within the last twenty years has rendered the greatest part of the tenantry absolutely dependent upon their landlords. The rack-rents they are bound to pay, and their inability to punctual payments, reduce them almost to a state of slavery and subjection to their landlords.'—*Astræa, or a Letter on the Abuses in the Administration of Justice in Ireland*, by an Attorney-at-law (Dublin, 1788), pp. 17, 18.

in mind the distinction between the landowner and the middleman, and to remember that the latter, with whom alone the cottier came in much contact, was constantly spoken of as the landlord. The 'little country gentlemen,' whom Arthur Young described as the pest of the country, and the great graziers, who were the immediate causes of the depopulation of large districts, were not landowners but tenants. I have endeavoured in the preceding chapter to trace the history of their rise, and it is only necessary to say a few more words on the subject. In spite of a great deal of conflicting evidence and of many emphatic denunciations, I do not think that the charge of exacting exorbitant or oppressive rents can be sustained against the Irish landowners of the eighteenth century considered as a class. The middleman, as Grattan once said, is in this respect their best defence, and the fact that the greater part of the country was sublet two, three, and sometimes four deep, appears to me to establish to demonstration that the real landlord did not exact an excessive or a competitive price. The faults of Irish landowners have, indeed, at most periods of Irish history been much more faults of negligence than of oppression. In the beginning of the century, when absenteeism was especially common, and when the conditions of residence were often not only disagreeable but dangerous, it was their main object to obtain from their land a secure revenue without trouble and without expense, and, in order to attain this end, they were prepared to grant fixity of tenure at extremely low rents. Leases, sometimes for ever, more often for lives extending over forty, fifty, sixty, or even seventy years, were general. Arthur Young, who describes this system, significantly observes that 'if long leases, at low rents, and profit incomes given, would have improved it, Ireland had long ago been a garden.'[1] When the long

[1] *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 93 99.

leases fell in, rents were, no doubt, greatly raised; but probably not more than in proportion to the general rise of prices and increase of prosperity; and it is very doubtful whether, when every due allowance has been made for the immense difference between the two countries, the Irish landlords compare in this respect at all unfavourably with the English ones.[1]

The occupancy of land was still regulated strictly by contract, and leases were almost always given by the landowners to their immediate tenants, though towards the close of the century it became common to restrict them to twenty-one years. The first tenants also usually sublet their tenancies on leases, though for shorter periods and on much more severe terms, and they were accustomed to turn out their sub-tenants and to resume the occupation before their own leases expired in order to treat with the landowner as occupying tenants for a renewal of them.[2] A detestable custom was very common

[1] According to the estimate of our best authority, Arthur Young, the average proportion between the rent of land in Ireland and in England in 1778 was nearly as 5 to 11, 'in other words, that space of land which in Ireland lets for 5*s*. would in England produce 11*s*.' Nominal rents in Ireland were therefore on an average less than half of what they were in England, and over a great part of England, Young considered them abnormally and unduly low. On the other hand, Young calculated that if 5*l*. per English acre were expended over all Ireland, which amounts to 88,341,136*l*., it would not more than build, fence, plant, drain, and improve that country to be on a par in those respects with England, and he also urged that the want of capital among Irish tenants made it impossible for them (even if they had the skill) to farm as profitably as English ones.—*Tour in Ireland*, ii. 88, 89. Young gives some statistics of the recent rise of rents. 'Lord Longford more than doubled in 30 years, Earl of Inniskilling quadrupled in ditto. Mr. Cooper almost trebled since 1748. Mayo trebled in 40 years, King's County ⅔ since 1750. Tipperary doubled in 20 years.' —Ibid. p. 332. Crumpe, in his *Essay on the Means of Providing Employment for the People* (1793), tries to establish that Young's estimate of the Irish rental is too low.

[2] See a valuable note on the agrarian system, in Hoare's *Tour*

when leases fell in, of publishing the fact in the chapels or market towns, inviting private proposals and accepting the highest bidder without any regard to the previous occupant.[1] In the arable counties, where husbandry was best, and where some degree of prosperity had been attained, Arthur Young found that the head tenants usually had leases for three lives if they were Protestants, for thirty-one years if they were Catholics.[2] The latter period was the longest for which a Catholic was yet allowed to hold a lease, and it was burdened by a most mischievous provision that two-thirds of the profits must go in rent. Young describes in detail a great number of resident landlords who were devoting themselves with much earnestness and intelligence to the improvement of agriculture, and many of these were steadily labouring, as far as local customs and old contracts would permit, to root out the system of middlemen, which was the master curse of Irish agrarian life. Clauses against subletting were not popular or easy to enforce in a country where the opposite system had long prevailed, but some progress in this direction was gradually effected, and a very able Irish writer in 1793 noticed that the middlemen were then 'wearing out in the more rich and best cultivated counties,' though they were still 'almost universal' in the poorer districts.[3]

In nearly every part of Ireland agriculture was still extremely rude. Absenteeism, great ignorance, want

in Ireland (1806), pp. 307, 308. See, too, Cooper's *Letters on the Irish Nation* (written in 1799), 2nd ed. p. 182–185.

[1] See Crumpe, pp. 232–234. This was called 'canting' lands. Cooper, pp. 185–187. Campbell's *Philosophical Survey*, p. 315.

[2] Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 103.

[3] Crumpe's *Essay on the Means of Providing Employment for the People*, p. 238. Arthur Young, ii. 100, 101. Young truly says: 'The middleman oppresses the cottar incomparably more than the principal landlord; to the one he is usually a tenant at will or at least under short terms; but under the other has the most advantageous tenure,' p. 100.

of capital and want of enterprise, all contributed to depress it, and in the more backward parts it was as barbarous as can well be conceived. The head tenant invariably became a middleman and land-jobber, and beneath him lay a multitude of wretched cultivators or labourers who were ground to the very dust by extortionate and oppressive exactions. In some parts of the kingdom it was a rare thing to find an occupying tenant who was the possessor of a plough. There were, perhaps, half a dozen ploughs—and these of the most primitive description—in a parish, which were let out by their owners at a high rate, but often the whole cultivation was by spade.[1] Frequently large tenancies were held by co-operation, 'knots' of poor men combining to bid for them, and managing them in common,[2] and frequently, too, labour was exacted in addition to a money rent. The purely labouring class were generally cottiers —paid for their labour not by money, but by small potato plots, and by the grazing of one or two cows, and they worked out these things for their employers usually at the rate of 6½d. a day.[3] Their homes and clothing were to the last degree degraded; they had no security of tenure and no possibility of saving, and they depended for their very subsistence on the annual produce of their potato plots; but in the better parts of Ireland, and under favourable circumstances, Arthur Young did not consider that their condition compared

[1] Crumpe, p. 227.

[2] See on these 'knots' Sigerson's *Hist. of Irish Land Tenures*, pp. 160, 161. Crumpe, p. 227. Arthur Young, ii. 103. This appears to have been very similar to the system called letting 'in runrig' which was once common in Scotland. It was generally abolished there towards the middle of the eighteenth century, when the townships were divided so that every tenant had his farm separate from the rest. See Ramsay's *Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 192, 207–209.

[3] Arthur Young, ii. 110. As we have seen, however, other writers calculate the rate at only 5*d.* or 6*d.*

altogether unfavourably with that of English labourers. Their food was much more abundant. Their children, unlike those of the Englishmen, were seldom without milk, and the absence of money in their dealings with their employers made it impossible for them to drink, as was common in England, a week's wages in a single night.[1] But the cottier population, who multiplied recklessly by early marriages over the barren lands of Kerry or the West, were perhaps as miserable as any class of men in Europe. To escape starvation was almost their highest aim, and even for this it was often necessary for them to spend a part of every summer in vagrant mendicancy. The months of July and August, when the old potatoes were exhausted, were generally months of absolute famine. Cabbages, boiled in water and mixed with some milk, were then the sole sustenance of the poor, who died in multitudes from diarrhœa; and a still remembered saying, that 'Kerry cows know Sunday,' recalls the time when the cattle being fattened by the summer grass underwent a weekly bleeding to make a holiday-meal for their half-starving owners.[2]

A very similar agrarian condition had long existed over a great part of Scotland, and, indeed, in many countries in an early stage of civilisation. The system of middlemen, the system of cottier labour, a population multiplying recklessly on a barren soil, barbarous methods of agriculture, enormous vagrancy and periodical famines were all well known in Scotland, and were cured at last by economical changes which swept away a great portion of the population. In Scotland, however, the painful transition was mitigated by the great

[1] See the very remarkable chapter on the Labouring Poor, *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 108-116.

[2] Some interesting particulars collected from traditionary sources, relating to the state of Munster in the last century, will be found in Fitzgibbon's *Ireland in* 1868.

industrial movement which followed the Union and absorbed a large part of the redundant population, by the excellent school system which spread some measure of knowledge and capacity among the poorest classes, and by the warm relations of amity that subsisted between the chiefs and their clansmen. In Ireland the evil extended over a wider area, and these mitigations were wanting. As we have already seen, the commercial code had artificially limited industrial life, and the penal code, long after it had ceased to be operative as a system of religious persecution, exercised a most pernicious influence in deepening class divisions, rendering the ascendant class practically absolute, driving enterprise and capital out of the country, and distorting in many ways its economical development. A great population existed in Ireland who were habitually on the verge of famine, and when any economical change took place which converted a part of the country from arable land into pasture, and restricted the amount of labour, they found themselves absolutely without resource.

The Whiteboy movement was first directed against the system of inclosing commons, which had lately been carried to a great extent. According to the contemporary and concurrent statements of Crawford, the Protestant, and of Curry, the Catholic historian of the time, landlords had often been guilty not only of harshness, but of positive breach of contract, by withdrawing from the tenants a right of commonage which had been given them as part of their bargain, when they received their small tenancies, and without which it was impossible that they could pay the rents which were demanded.[1]

[1] Crawford's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 317. Curry's *Civil Wars of Ireland*, ii. 271, 272. 'I make use of this opportunity to say something to your Lordship of certain riotous assemblies which have been held in the province of Munster. These rioters began by levelling inclosures by pretence of right, and have since proceeded

It was at the close of 1761 that the first signs of resistance appeared. Wesley, who six months later was travelling through Ireland, took great pains to obtain an accurate account of their origin, and he has given the following description of it. 'About the beginning of December last,' he says, 'a few men met by night near Nenagh, in the county of Limerick, and threw down the fences of some commons which had been lately inclosed. Near the same time, others met in the counties of Tipperary, Waterford, and Cork. As no one offered to suppress or hinder them, they increased in numbers continually, calling themselves Whiteboys, wearing white cockades and white linen frocks. In February there were five or six parties of them, 200 to 300 men in each, who moved up and down chiefly in the night, . . . levelled a few fences, dug up some grounds, and hamstrung some cattle, perhaps fifty or sixty in all. One body of them came into Clogheen, of about 500 foot, and 200 horse. They moved as exactly as regular troops, and appeared to be thoroughly disciplined.' They sent threatening letters, compelled every one they met to swear allegiance to their leader, 'Queen Sive,' and to obey her commands, and threatened savage penalties against those who refused to do so.[1] In an unfinished fragment, 'On the Disturbances in Ireland at the beginning of the reign of George III.,' which was written by Edmund Burke, the first disturbance is said to have taken place in the county of Cork. A very re-

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to other outrages under colour of redressing the grievances of the poor.' — Halifax to Egremont, April 8, 1762, Record Office. The Under-Secretary Knox, who was by birth an Irishman, and was well acquainted with Irish affairs, states that the rights of common-age were taken away from tenants in Ireland without compensation, and that grand juries rejected all presentments on the subject.— Knox's *Extra Official Papers*, Appendix, No. 1.

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, June 1762.

spectable Protestant attorney named Fant was living, in 1760, on the borders of that county, and he had for a long time enjoyed a good reputation. His mind, however, gradually became disordered. He entered into a long succession of disputes with his neighbours, and at last finding some charges he had made against them disregarded by the Government, he, shortly after the arrival of Lord Halifax,[1] assembled many of the 'meaner people of Kilmallock, and having warmed them with liquor, he harangued on the grievances which the poor in general suffered from the oppression of the rich, and telling them their town common had been illegally inclosed, and that they had a right by law to level the walls by which they were shut out from it, they very readily engaged under the authority of a lawyer, and that night completely demolished all the fences which inclosed their reputed common.' 'This,' adds Burke, 'and no other beginning had these disturbances which afterwards spread over a great part of the adjacent county, and which have been industriously represented of so treasonable a nature.'[2]

The outburst spread rapidly through many counties of Munster, and while in some districts it was specially directed against inclosures, in others it was more peculiarly turned against certain kinds of tithes. The great tithes or tithes of corn were, indeed, readily paid; but several other tithes were much disputed, and had long attained a foremost place among the popular grievances.

The Irish tithe system was, indeed, one of the most absurd that can be conceived. Tithes in their original theory are not absolute property, but property assigned in trust for the discharge of certain public duties. In

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[1] Lord Halifax came to Ireland in October 1761.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 45.

Ireland, when they were not appropriated by laymen, they were paid by an impoverished Catholic peasantry to a clergy who were opposed to their religion, and usually not even resident among them,[1] and they were paid in such a manner that the heaviest burden lay on the very class who were least able to bear it. It was a common thing for a parish to consist of some 4,000 or 5,000 acres of rich pasture-land held by a prosperous grazier who had been rapidly amassing a large fortune through the increased price of cattle, and of 300 or 400 acres of inferior land occupied by a crowd of miserable cottiers. In accordance with the vote of the House of Commons in 1735, the former was exempted from the burden which was thrown on the latter.[2] In Limerick, Tipperary, Clare, Meath, and Waterford, there were to be found, in the words of Arthur Young, 'the greatest graziers and cowkeepers perhaps in the world, some who rent and occupy from 3,000*l.* to 10,000*l.* a year, . . . the only occupiers in the kingdom who have any considerable substance.'[3] These men were free from the tithes which were extorted from the wretched potato plot which was the sole subsistence of the cottier. The poor man was probably too ignorant to know that the exemption of pasture-land, being due

[1] As a very able, and at the same time violently anti-Catholic writer says: 'While the Popish priests . . . . are indefatigable in performing the duties of their functions . . . . the Established Church are shamefully neglected by their clergy, who consider nothing but how to make the most money out of their benefices, leaving their incomes to be collected by tithe-mongers, who grind the faces of the poor by every species of oppression, and send the money away to the rectors, who, instead of applying any part of it to acts of charity and hospitality, do not so much as lay it out among those from whom it is collected.'—Sir J. Caldwell, *On the Proposal to enable Papists to take real Securities* (Dublin, 1764), pp. 29, 30.

[2] Mullalla's *View of Irish Affairs*, i. 248-253, ii. 9, 10. Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 9.

[3] Arthur Young's *Tour*, ii. 101.

to the vote of one House of Parliament, had no legal validity, and was sustained only by the terrorism which the landlords and larger tenants exercised over the clergy, but he could hardly fail to feel the gross injustice of his lot, or to perceive that those who had acquired a monopoly of political power had used it to throw their share of the common burdens on the unrepresented poor.

If the clergy had been a resident clergy, discharging duties that were useful to the whole or the great majority of the people, the amount received by them in tithes would probably not have been thought excessive. Their advocates maintained with truth that the full legal tenth was rarely or never exacted. In many, perhaps most, cases a fixed sum called a *modus* was paid by the parishioners instead of the legal tithe of kind, and these customary rates had by long prescription obtained the force of law. There were instances, no doubt, of extortionate and tyrannical clergymen, but they were not common, and in general it was the tithe-farmer and not the clergyman, as it was the middleman and not the landlord, who oppressed the people. The tithe-proctor who collected tithes for the clergyman, and the tithe-farmer who bought them from him at a fixed rate, were among the worst figures in Irish life, and they were at the same time an inevitable product of the Irish ecclesiastical system. A man of purely scholastic education, untrained in country business, often without an acre of land in his own hands, and without the means of carrying away his portion from a single farm, was manifestly incapable of treating at the same time with several hundreds of Catholic cottiers for his legal rights, estimating the produce of every field, ascertaining and securing the proportion which was due to him. In the few cases in which the circumstances of the clergyman enabled him to do this, his tithes were usually paid with

little reluctance.[1] In the great majority of cases, however, the clergyman resorted to an agent, who often intercepted much the larger portion of what was paid. Sometimes the agent charged a percentage in addition to the tithe, and extorted it from the people. More commonly he paid a fixed sum to the clergyman, and recuperated himself by a grinding tyranny of the tenants. Sometimes he sublet his agency for a fixed sum to a subordinate oppressor. Sometimes the cottiers who were unable to pay in full were obliged to give a bond bearing interest, and were in this manner soon reduced to absolute slavery. 'In some of the southern parts of Ireland,' said Grattan, in one of the tithe debates, 'the peasantry are made tributary to the tithe-farmer, draw home his corn, his hay, and his turf for nothing; give him their labour, their cars, and their horses at certain times of the year for nothing. These oppressions not only exist, but have acquired a formal and distinct appellation—tributes.'[2]

One of the peculiarities of this system was its complete absence of uniformity, and in Munster, which was much poorer than Leinster and Ulster, and much more densely populated than Connaught, the exaction was especially severe. Grattan stated, what does not appear

[1] 'In parishes where the rectors take the tithes into their own hands, it is acknowledged that the clergyman receives much more than ever he did through the mediation of such agents, besides the additional comfort of seeing peace, harmony, and confidence restored to his district.' —Father O'Leary's defence, O'Leary's *Works*, p. 285.

[2] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 45. A full account of the different abuses relating to tithes will be found in Grattan's *Speeches* on the subject in 1787, 1788, and 1789 (vol. ii. of his *Collected Speeches*). See, too, O'Leary's *Tracts*, and Arthur Young's *Tour*, ii. 186, 187. The chief works in defence of the system were, *A Defence of the Protestant Clergy in the South of Ireland, in Answer to Mr. Grattan*, by 'Authenticus' (1788), and Bishop Woodward's *Present State of the Church of Ireland* (1787).

to have been seriously disputed,[1] that 'the rate of tithing through the whole nation is on an average one-third less than that charged in Munster.' A contagion of rapacity appears to have passed through the Protestant clergy of this province. In the course of a few years, livings often doubled and sometimes trebled in value[2] owing to the increased severity with which tithes were exacted. The bonds which I have just described were called 'Kerry bonds,' being especially common in that county. The tithe of potatoes, which was that which was most oppressive to the poor, was almost peculiar to Munster, being only exacted in very few districts of the other provinces.[3] A tithe of turf and a tithe of furze had been lately introduced, and certain moduses, or compositions, which had elsewhere been substituted for other tithes were in this province unknown. The cottier, it was said in a debate in 1787, often paid 7*l.* an acre for land, received 6*d.* a day for his labour, and paid 8*s.* to 12*s.* for his tithes.[4]

Some of the demands that were made appear to have been of very doubtful legality, and the tithe of turf which was sometimes exacted was pronounced by the Attorney-General to be clearly illegal.[5] It was, however, almost impossible for a poor man to obtain legal redress. By a scandalous injustice all questions of disputed tithes were brought before an ecclesiastical court, so that the same men were both parties and judges in the suit. There was, it is true, a right of appeal, and the Attorney-General in one of the debates on the subject said that 'if any ecclesiastical court should presume to entertain a suit for the subtraction of tithe of turf, the courts of law would grant inme-

[1] See 'Authenticus,' p. 37.
[2] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 31.
[3] Ibid. ii. 29.
[4] Ibid. p. 9.
[5] In 1783, *Irish Parl. Debates*, vii. 344, 352. His position was disputed by 'Authenticus,' pp. 49-51.

diate redress.' The answer of Grattan, however, was very conclusive. 'It has been admitted that some tithes are illegal, such as those on turf, and the poor man is advised to institute a lawsuit for relief. Are gentlemen serious when they give this advice? or will they point out how the man who earns 5*d.* a day is to cope with the wealthy tithe-farmer who oppresses him?'[1]

This condition of affairs sufficiently explains the violence of the tithe war in Munster, and the sympathy which in their attacks upon tithes the Whiteboys undoubtedly found outside their own body.[2] The clergy had few friends, and the tithe-farmer was universally detested. The abolition of the tithe of agistment showed sufficiently the sentiments of the House of Commons, and in Ulster, where the Presbyterians predominated, and where tillage was more common than in the other provinces, the customary tithes were extremely moderate. Potatoes were almost everywhere exempt. Flax, the chief material of the industry of the North, paid only 6*d.* a farm irrespective of quantity.[3] Hemp appears to have been generally tithed at the same rate, and the new charges in Munster excited a very widespread indignation even among Protestants. Woodward, Bishop of Cloyne, was the chief writer who main-

[1] *Irish Parl. Debates*, vii. 344, 360.

[2] 'If they [the curates] were the best parish ministers that ever lived, a relation or a dependent to a bishop or a great man would be preferred to them; they are, therefore, often obliged to have recourse to farming for a subsistence, so that both their persons and their offices are brought into the lowest contempt; and it is extremely common for persons of the Established Church to join with the Papists and Presbyterians in clamourous, violent, and tumultuous oppositions against those who exact what are called Church dues, for the use of those by whom no Church duties are performed.'—*Examination whether it is Expedient to enable Papists to take Real Securities, &c.* By Sir James Caldwell (Dublin, 1764), p. 31.

[3] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 40, 86.

tained that the Whiteboy movement was a Popish conspiracy, but he acknowledged that it was partly organised by men who were 'nominal Protestants,' and greatly supported by the connivance of Protestant landlords.[1] There were many of these who never entered a church, who looked upon tithes simply as a deduction from their own rents, and who were only too glad that popular indignation should be diverted from themselves to the clergy; and the better members of the class were very justly indignant at the scandalous neglect of clerical duty which was common. In a remarkable speech which was delivered in 1763, Mr. (afterwards Sir Lucius) O'Brien, the member for Ennis, described the condition to which Protestants in the county of Clare were reduced 'from the total neglect of those who have nominally the care of their souls, and actually a tithe of their property.' He stated that in sixty-two out of the seventy-six parishes of the county no Protestant church existed, that 'the rectors of most of them were non-resident, nor was there so much as a curate of 40*l.* a year to supply their place,' and that, therefore, the inhabitants of many parishes were reduced either to a total neglect of all religious duties or to have recourse to a Popish priest. 'One of the bad consequences,' he added, 'of the shameful neglect of our clergy is those Risings which have been mentioned to the violation of all law and the disgrace of all government, for who can suppose that men will patiently suffer the extortion of a tithe-monger where no duty for which the tithe is claimed has been performed in the memory of man? . . . The insurrections against which we are so eager to call out the terrors of the law are no more than branches of which the shameful negligence of our clergy

[1] Woodward's *Present State of the Church of Ireland*, pp. 29 94.

and the defects in our religious Institution constitute the root.'[1]

Under such circumstances, and encouraged by the supineness which was at first generally shown by the local magistrates, the Whiteboy organisation struck deep root and spread silently but rapidly through many counties; and although before 1770 it had nearly ceased, it burst into a new vigour in Kildare, Kilkenny, and the Queen's County in 1775, and continued there with partial interruptions till 1785, when it again spread widely through Munster.[2] Every season of distress intensified it, and although it has undergone many transformations, assumed many names, and aimed at many different objects, it cannot be said to be extinct at the present hour. The names of those who constructed it will never be known, but they were evidently men of

[1] *Debates on the Affairs of Ireland in* 1763 *and* 1764, *taken by a Military Officer* [Sir J. Caldwell], pp. 656 659. In a pamphlet which appeared in 1760 it is said, 'Our poor Protestants are daily falling off from the religion of their forefathers. . . . There are 1,600 parish churches in the kingdom in ruins, and of the 600 that are standing, one-third are ready to tumble, and the clergy do not reside as they ought to. The true cause of the scandalous neglect and almost disuse of divine service in the remote country parishes, where the churches are all in ruins, is chiefly owing to two canons of our own Church, which have certainly done more hurt to the Protestant religion in Ireland than all the rest have done good.' They are the 21st, which forbids the clergy, under pain of excommunication, to preach and administer the sacrament in private houses, except in cases of sickness, and the 45th, which forbids the people to detain their tithes from their parish minister 'by colour of duty omitted.'—*The Pedlar's Letter to the Bishops and Clergy of Ireland* (Dublin, 1760). Sir James Caldwell calculated that there were 'not more than 550 officiating clergy of the Church of England in the whole kingdom, and the greater part of these are poor, miserable curates whose whole income at the most is but 40*l.* a year.'—Caldwell on *The Act to enable Papists to take Real Security.* On the neglect of public worship by the upper classes, see Woodward, p. 62.

[2] Lewis on *Irish Disturbances*, p. 19.

some education and of no small organising ability, and they created a system of intimidation which in many districts became the true representation of the Catholic peasantry, and which often made it much safer to violate than to obey the law.

In some cases the Whiteboys acted with all the audacity of open insurgents. Great bodies of men traversed the country, often in the open daylight, wearing white cockades and blowing horns. In several cases they awaited an encounter with soldiers. They broke open the gaol at Tralee and released the prisoners. They threatened to burn the town of Newmarket, in the diocese of Cloyne, unless a Whiteboy confined there was released. They burnt several houses which soldiers had occupied, and alarms were spread, though apparently without real foundation, that they were seeking by intercepting provisions to threaten Limerick, Cork, and Ennis with famine.[1] On one occasion in the beginning of the outbreak they assembled at Lismore, and affixed a placard at the post-office door requiring the inhabitants on the following night to illuminate their houses and provide a certain number of horses bridled and saddled, and the injunction was punctually obeyed.[2] On another,

[1] This was asserted by Bishop Woodward in his very alarmist pamphlet, p. 96. The reader should, however, compare the account, given by Father O'Leary in his curious and eloquent 'defence of his conduct and writings,' of the exaggerations which gained currency under the influence of panic. Among others, in Monkstown (near Cork), at the height of the bathing season, 'two wags for the sake of diversion sounded an old horn in the dead of the night and threw all the ladies and gentlemen into a panic. In the space of three weeks this nocturnal sport was represented in the distant prints as a serious blockade by Capt. Right at the head of 500 men.'—O'Leary's *Works* (Boston, 1868), p. 308. Lord Halifax wrote in strong terms about the great exaggerations concerning the Whiteboy organisation that were disseminated.—Halifax to Egremont (Secret), April 17, 1762 (Record Office).

[2] Lewis's *Irish Disturbances*, p. 6.

they marched into the large village of Cappoquin, drew up in front of a horse barrack, fired several shots, and marched by the sentry who was on guard while their piper played 'The Lad with the White Cockade.'[1] On a third, a large party well mounted and clad in white rode into the little town of Kilworth, in the county of Cork, at three in the morning, firing many shots, and compelled the inhabitants at once 'to illuminate their windows, which was done speedily and in great order, more from fear than respect.' The terrified inhabitant who wrote to inform the Government, had heard that 7,000 men were assembled in the mountains near Dungarvan, and that 20,000 would 'assemble next week near this town to go on some grand project.'[2] More commonly, however, the tactics of the Whiteboys were less ostentatious, but much more formidable, and their small parties moving silently in the dead of night committed depredations which threatened to reduce a great part of Ireland to absolute anarchy.

They announced from the beginning, that their object was 'to do justice to the poor by restoring the ancient commons and redressing other grievances,'[3] and they soon undertook to regulate the whole relation between landlord and tenant, and to enforce a new system of law wholly different from the law of the land. They waged especially a desperate war against tithe-proctors and tithe-farmers, against the system of Kerry bonds, against a class of men called canters, who were accustomed to bid for the tithe of their neighbours' land, and who by Whiteboy terrorism were almost extirpated from Munster.[4] They issued proclamations forbidding any man under terrible penalties to pay higher rates of

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[1] Lewis's *Irish Disturbances*, p. 6.
[2] *Irish Departmental Correspondence.* Irish State Paper Office.
[3] Lewis, p. 5. [4] Woodward, p. 46.

tithe than they specified. They seized arms wherever they could obtain them, compelled all whom they suspected of connivance with the Government to abandon their farms under pain of having their houses burnt over their heads, and avenged by fearful crimes every infringement of their code.

As early as January 1762 an informant writes from the county of Tipperary that 'above 500 men frequently assemble with shirts over their clothes doing whatever mischief they please by night, under the sanction of being fairies, as they call themselves.' 'The fairies are composed of all the able young fellows from Clonmel to Mitchelstown.' They had levelled great numbers of enclosures, sent many threatening letters, rescued property which had been seized by landlords for non-payment of rent, compelled cloth weavers to lower the price of their goods, seized all the horses they could discover around Cahir, and established such a terrorism in the county that if any farmer dismissed a servant or a shepherd no one dared to take his place unless 'he had more interest with the fairies.' No one was allowed to bid for a farm which had been put up to auction until it had been waste for five years on pain of death or of the burning of his house.[1] Grass land was sometimes turned up to oblige the landlord to let it for tillage, and great numbers of cattle were killed or hamstrung. A letter in 1778 tells how a single person passing from Ballinasloe fair to Clara had 760 sheep killed in one night, and next morning no one dared to send him a horse to carry away the carcases, or to bid more for them than 3*s.* 6*d.* a sheep, that being the rate which the Whiteboy proclamations had prescribed. In the same year the chief inhabitants of a portion of the King's County speak, in a memorial to the Government, of 'vast num-

[1] *Civil Petitions*, Irish Record Office.

bers of people assembling in, and going on foot and horseback through, the county by night, burning hay and corn, houghing, killing, and maiming cattle of every kind in great numbers, writing and posting up anonymous letters and notices threatening death and destruction to several individuals if they pay their tithes, taxes, hearth money, or exceed certain prices for land, and refuse to comply with their unlawful demands and combinations.' The exportation of corn and flour was sometimes obstructed by force, masters were compelled to release their apprentices, daughters of rich farmers were carried away and forced into marriage, sums of money were levied from farmers to defend the Whiteboys on their trial. In some districts large bodies of men appeared on market day on the roads round some country town, or on Sundays near the chapel doors, compelling all who passed to swear that they would obey the laws and future commands of Captain Right. Many fictitious names were attached to the Whiteboy proclamations, but that of Captain Right soon predominated, and it became more powerful in Munster, and in many counties of Leinster, than King or Viceroy or Parliament.[1]

A few murders were committed; but they were much more rare in the early Whiteboy movement than in the later periods of Irish agrarian crime, and the writers who showed the strongest disposition to aggravate the character of the disturbances are almost silent about them.[2] Sometimes those who had violated some

[1] Papers on 'The State of the Country.'—Irish State Paper Office. See, too, many particulars collected by Woodward and by Arthur Young.

[2] O'Leary says:—'In the long space of fifteen months, whilst the disturbances continued, until the present Earl of Carhampton (then Lord Luttrell) came to Munster, I never heard of any murder committed by the Whiteboys.'—*Works*, p. 307. 'The Bishop [Woodward] cannot pro-

article of the Whiteboy code were merely seized and compelled to swear that they would never repeat the offence; but more commonly they were punished with great atrocity. One of the mildest punishments was to drag a man at midnight from his bed, often in mid-winter, beat him, and leave him bound and naked in a ditch by the roadside. In one case, which is related in detail, the captors bound their prisoner to the post of a turnpike gate and compelled the keeper to swear that he would not relieve him till a certain number of hours had passed. In another, they carried a man who had threatened to inform against some illicit distillers about a mile on a bier, and left him bound in the very streets of Cahir, where he remained unrescued the whole night. Not unfrequently they carried their victim to a newly dug grave and left him, sometimes with his ears cut off, buried up to the chin in earth, or in thorns or furze. Men were placed naked on horseback on saddles covered with thorns, or with a hedgehog's skin. Many cottages were burnt and their inmates forced to abandon the country. A man once appropriated two pounds of powder which had been concealed for the Whiteboys. They discovered him, and having obliged him to pour the powder into his hat, they placed it beneath him, ignited it, and blew him to pieces. Their threatening notices were filled with the most savage menaces, and their outrages in some districts were so frequent and so severe that scarcely anyone dared to resist them. The description given, by a conspicuous magistrate, of the agrarian crime in 1831 may be applied without qualification to the period of the first Whiteboy rising: 'The combination is directly opposed to the law, and it is stronger than it, because it punishes the violation of its

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duce one single instance of any man's being murdered by the Whiteboys in the counties of Cork or Kerry.'—Ibid. p. 311.

mandates with more severity and infinitely more certainty. If a peasant resists the combination it is scarcely possible he can escape punishment; if he violates the law his chance of escape is at least fifty to one.'[1]

The insurrection sprang in the first instance from intolerable misery not a little aggravated by injustice; but it speedily drew into its vortex all the restless, criminal, and turbulent elements of the community, and its demoralising influence can hardly be exaggerated. For a time it almost paralysed the law. Over large districts no tithes were paid, and scarcely anyone dared to distrain for rent, or even to impound trespassing cattle.[2] Unlike ordinary crime, the Whiteboy outrages were systematically, skilfully, and often very successfully directed to the enforcement of certain rules of conduct. Strangers were wholly unmolested, and in this, as in later periods of agrarian crime, extreme social disturbance led to no highway robbery.[3] It

[1] Lord Oxmantown, quoted by Lewis, p. 237. Hely Hutchinson related in the Irish House of Commons that, having heard that many of the tenants-at-will on his own estate in the county of Waterford were joining in the combination against the clergy, he threatened any who did so with immediate ejection. They answered that they could not help it, for it was better to be ejected than to have their throats cut, which would be the infallible consequence of refusal.—Caldwell's *Debates*, p. 85. Sir R. Musgrave, who was High Sheriff of the county of Waterford, once sentenced a Whiteboy to public whipping, but he could find no one to execute the sentence, though he offered twenty guineas, and though a large body of troops were present to protect the executioner. He accordingly executed it himself.—*Woodward*, p. 97. I have taken most of the accounts of Whiteboy outrages from the papers on the subject in the Irish State Paper Office.

[2] Woodward, p. 97.

[3] Twiss's *Tour in Ireland*, p. 197. Mrs. Delany had before noticed that 'a comfortable circumstance belonging to this country is that the roads are so good and free from robbers that we may drive safely any hour of the night.'—*Correspondence*, ii. 626. Bianconi, after the peace of 1815, established the well-known public cars, which soon extended over almost the whole of Ireland, and were running

must be added, however, that although the crimes of the Whiteboys were undoubtedly many and grievous, they were greatly and often systematically exaggerated. The panic they inspired, the mystery hanging over obscure, nocturnal, ill-reported outrages in remote districts, the natural desire of the classes who were chiefly menaced to magnify the disturbances in order to compel Government to send troops for their protection, the animosities of class and creed which coloured most Irish narratives, all contributed to the exaggeration. Every crime that took place in a country which had at all times been exceedingly lawless was attributed to the Whiteboy organisation, and later writers have a very natural tendency to relate acts of extreme and exceptional atrocity as if they were fair samples of the ordinary crimes. Among the many curious Whiteboy proclamations which fell into the hands of the Government there are some disclaiming all connection with some particular outrages, and complaining that unauthorised men were going about the country pretending for their own purposes to be Whiteboys.[1] There was no general attack either on

during one of the worst periods of agrarian crime and distress ever known in the country. In a paper read in 1857 he made this remarkable statement:—'My conveyances, many of them carrying very important mails, have been travelling during all hours of the day and night, often in lonely and unfrequented places; and during the long period of forty-two years that my establishment is now in existence, the slightest injury has never been done by the people to my property or that entrusted to my care.'—Mrs. O'Connell's *Life of Bianconi*, p. 88.

[1] Fourteen sheep belonging to a Mr. Tennison having been stolen, he received a notice signed Sieve Oultagh (a favourite Whiteboy signature), declaring that this was not done by her or her children, but by 'some rogues,' 'unknown to me,' and promising to protect his property to the best of her power, and 'clear the country' of those who had injured it. In another letter with the same signature it is said:—'She [Oultagh] and her company does not intend or mean following any bad practice, but to the contrary, to relieve the poor who are oppressed by most people,

landlords or on the clergy of the Established Church, and particular proprietors are sometimes spoken of with marked respect.[1] In a very remarkable and touching proclamation, which was issued in the county of Cork in the beginning of 1787, Captain Right disclaims any wish to break the law or to rob the landlord, but denounces the unjust, and, as he believed, illegal confiscation of the improvements of tenants as the chief grievance to be redressed.[2]

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and especially by tithe-mongers whom she intends obstructing in their exorbitant prices, and also to open commonages and level them; and as to your walls being thrown down, it was not out of malice or hatred to you, but because you encroached on the road.' *Book of Entries, Civil Petitions*, Irish Record Office.

[1] Thus one curious proclamation of 1788, signed by Captain Right, orders a suspected informer to leave the country and 'give up her lands to Lady Fitzgerald without law or clamher [*sic*] for her Ladyship's honour never intended to hurt any of my men and is ever a friend to them, and for that reason I shall see her justified.'—Irish State Paper Office (Miscellaneous Papers).

[2] This proclamation is so curious as illustrating the agrarian notions of the Whiteboys, and also the long persistence of some of the causes of Irish disturbances, that I shall give the chief parts in spite of their length: 'Land-setters in whom the fee-simple lies have encouraged their tenants to manure and improve their lands on presumption of renewing their leases when they expire.' 'The poor tenant being encouraged by the land-setters' deluding speeches will go on with building, ditching, draining, and planting fruit and forest trees until he drains himself from every penny he can collect or make, having implicit reliance on the landlord's former promises, and enjoying the thoughts of him, his son or daughter, having the pleasure and satisfaction of keeping the benefit of his money and labour. Now, dear brethren, ye will give me leave to inform ye that I declare myself as true and faithful a subject as any in Ireland, both to King and government, and as the laws of England are our chief directory and always governed by them [*sic*], in England, when the tenant's lease is expired no man will dare cant him or his children off their farm, nor will the landlord dream of setting to any other person but the occupier. This is the fair, honest mode of proceeding practised in England, which mode shall be established in this kingdom. . . . Let no man in like manner think that I want to en-

In some districts and periods the outbreaks were chiefly agrarian; in others they were more especially directed against tithes. At first the Protestant clergymen appear to have been rarely or never molested, and the tithe-farmer was the special object of the popular antipathy. There were, however, some instances of clergymen who received savage threatening letters, and were obliged to fly from their parishes through fear of Whiteboys, and in a few cases their houses were attacked, their property was injured, and they themselves underwent atrocious personal outrages.[1] Lord Luttrell related to the Irish House of Commons how one of his friends riding one morning near the town of Urlingford, in the county of Kilkenny, found a pair of ears and a cheek nailed to a post, and soon after he overtook a muffled figure riding on in great and evident pain, which proved to be the clergyman to whom they belonged.[2]

It is not surprising that in the extreme panic produced by the outbreak it should have been attributed to political or religious causes. It was reported that French money was frequently found in the pockets of arrested Whiteboys; that men with the appearance of officers and speaking French had been seen in remote districts of the south; that Whiteboys had been known to march in large bodies and with the discipline of regular soldiers; that

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courage any tenants to rob or deprive the landlord of being offered the full value of his ground. No, I do not; and in case of a misunderstanding between the land-setter and occupier, in such case or difference I order that such tenant will take from the land-setter at the valuation of two or three honest, disinterested gentlemen of that part of the country, who will be judges of the soil and constitution of the country; any tenant refusing this order to be banished, punished, and deemed a dishonest man.—(Signed) Captain Right.' *Papers on the State of the Country*, Irish State Paper Office.

[1] See these cases in Woodward, pp. 99–103.

[2] *Irish Parl. Debates*, vi. 432.

the beginning of the disturbances synchronised with the expedition of Thurot, that the whole movement was a Popish insurrection directed against Protestants, as such, and fostered by the French, with whom we were at war. The culprits, it was said, were chiefly if not exclusively Papists. One of the main objects of their hostility was the tithe which was paid to the Protestant clergymen. Whiteboy meetings were said to have been sometimes held in remote chapels. Whiteboys were accused of systematically disarming the Protestants, breaking into their houses and seizing their guns. Lord Dunboyne, Mr. Butler, and several other Catholic gentlemen of the county Tipperary were obliged to go to Dublin to enter bail on the charge of supporting the Whiteboys.[1] A priest who had been degraded for some ecclesiastical offence accused the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel of having, in conjunction with other Catholic bishops and with foreign agents, originated the Whiteboy disturbances in order to assist a French invasion, to restore the Pretender, and to extirpate heresy from Ireland; and although his deposition bore on its face clear marks of falsehood, and was considered absolutely worthless by the Government, some were found to believe it.[2] Fear and religious hatred combined to make men believe any story which gave a colour to the theory that a massacre of Protestants was intended. The House of Commons in one of its resolutions spoke of 'the Popish insurrection in Munster,' and several later writers have supposed that a religious or political element mingled with, if it did not produce, the Whiteboy movement.

The evidence, however, against this theory is, I

[1] Crawford, ii. 319.

[2] See Musgrave's *Rebellions in Ireland*, appendix i. On the completely worthless character of the evidence adduced to prove the political and religious character of the disturbances, see Arthur Young, i. 82. Killen's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, ii. 285-287.

think, conclusive, and the appearances which gave it some plausibility may be easily explained. It can be established by the clearest proof that the first Whiteboy disturbance did not take place till near the close of 1761—more than a year after the expedition of Thurot.[1] If French money was sometimes found, if Frenchmen were sometimes seen among the peasants of Kerry, this was only the natural consequence of the smuggling trade with France which was incessantly carried on along the whole line of coast. In a province where nearly all the poor were Catholics an extensive disturbance must necessarily have been chiefly Catholic, and it not surprising that those who sought to plunder arms should have turned chiefly to Protestant houses, as Protestants alone were by law allowed to possess them.[2] Tithes were hated as an unequal and oppressive impost falling upon a people who were already sunk in the lowest depths of poverty, and religious feeling had little or nothing to say to the antipathy. The tithe-farmer, who was quite as often a Papist as a Protestant,[3] was much more hated than the clergyman, and the Whiteboy made it his object to reduce the dues paid to his own priest as well as the tithes that were paid to the rector.[4]

[1] In addition to the passages I have already given, the reader will find much evidence of this in Lewis on *Irish Disturbances*. Sir C. Lewis has justly adverted to the apparent dishonesty of Sir R. Musgrave in antedating the beginning of the movement contrary to the clearest evidence, to make it coincide with Conflans' intended expedition. (P. 18.)

[2] That the law preventing Catholics from possessing arms without licence was by no means inoperative may be inferred from a statement of Lord Halifax: 'A vigorous search for arms has by my orders been made in the houses of Papists in that city [Cork] and county, and the result was that in a city so populous and a county so extensive, and both so full of Roman Catholics, no more than thirty unserviceable firelocks and a few hangers have been found.'—Halifax to Egremont, April 17, 1762, Record Office. In the King's instructions to Lord Hertford (August 1765) there is a special clause about enforcing this law.

[3] See vol. i. 313.

[4] O'Leary's *Works*, p. 283

As I have already shown, the conversion of arable land into pasture, which was the chief agrarian grievance, was much more universal among Catholics than among Protestants, for the penal laws about land discouraged in the highest degree the cultivation of the soil, and the Catholic landlord or large tenant almost invariably turned his land into pasture in order to evade the cupidity of the discoverers.[1]

We are not, however, obliged to base our judgment of the Whiteboy movement on doubtful inference. Positive evidence of the most decisive character attests its unsectarian and unpolitical character. The Government sent down a commission of experienced lawyers to inquire into its origin, and published in the 'Gazette' their official report, that 'the authors of these disturbances have consisted indiscriminately of persons of different persuasions, and that no marks of disaffection to his Majesty's person or government have been discovered upon this occasion in any class of people.'[2] Lord Egremont, the Secretary of State, wrote from London to the Lord Lieutenant in much alarm that it was reported in

[1] See vol. i. 219-221. 'The oppression of the poor in the south proceeds very much from the Papists themselves, as the graziers who engross the farms are mostly Romanists. . . . Till some step is taken in favour of tillage and the poor, Whiteboyism will probably remain.'—Campbell's *Philosophical Survey*, p. 315. 'Papists,' said another contemporary writer, 'instead of improving on a short tenure, keep their lands waste to prevent as much as possible any temptation to leases of reversion, which Protestants alone are qualified to take. Pasturage, a lazy, wasting, and depopulating sort of industry, is alone adapted to their condition.'—*The Dangers of Popery to the Present Government, examined by M. O'Connor* (Dublin, 1761), p. 24. 'The law about informers,' says another writer, 'has put a stop to agriculture, and converted the Popish landowners into a huge tribe of graziers like our Scythian ancestors. Pasturage is one defence with them against informers, and is their sole occupation.'—*Observations on the Popery Laws* (1771), p. 30.

[2] Lewis, pp. 13, 14.

England that a great disciplined Popish insurrection had arisen under French instigation in Munster. In his reply, Halifax enumerated the stringent means he had taken to discover the truth. Letters in the post-office had been searched. All suspicious persons had been arrested and their papers examined, and every kind of encouragement had been held out to those who could give intelligence. And yet, says Lord Halifax, 'not one particular of the matters suggested to your lordship has hitherto come with the smallest degree of authenticity to my knowledge. No French officers in disguise have been taken; no trace of traitorous or suspicious foreign correspondence has been discovered; none of those stated and measured rendezvous to learn military discipline by moonlight have been found out. It does not even appear that these rioters were furnished with many arms. . . . Protestants, as well as Papists, have been concerned in these tumults—one or two of the most considerable of those we have hitherto detected are Protestants; these outrages have fallen indiscriminately on persons of both persuasions, and I cannot yet find that any matter of state or religion has been mentioned at their meetings.'[1] Sir Richard Aston, the Chief Justice of Common Pleas, and Serjeant Malone were sent on a commission to try the prisoners, and the former drew up a report, in which the latter concurred, exactly to the same effect. 'Upon the strictest inquiry,' he says, 'into the causes of the many outrages committed in different parts of the province of Munster there did not appear to me the least reason to impute those disturbances to disaffection to his Majesty, his Government, or the laws in general; but, on the contrary, that these disorders really and not colourably took their rise from declared complaints and grievances of a private nature. . . . It

[1] Halifax to Egremont (Secret), April 17, 1762.—Record Office.

ever turned out to be the result of some local dissatisfaction. . . . The subject-matter of their grievances was chiefly such as price of labour too cheap, of victuals too dear, of land excessive and oppressive. In some instances their resentment proceeded against particular persons for their having taken mills or bargains over the head of another, . . . and turning out, by a consent to an advanced price, the old tenant. . . . In the perpetration of these disorders (howèver industriously the contrary has been promoted) Papists and Protestants were promiscuously concerned, and, in my opinion, the majority of the former is with more justice to be attributed to the odds of number in the country than the influence arising from the difference of principles.'[1]

This evidence applies to the first outburst of the Whiteboy movement. That its subsequent outburst was equally unconnected with religious or political motives is, I believe, no less certain; although it is, of course, possible that in particular districts religious animosities may have mixed with and intensified the class war, and although it is, I believe, true that Whiteboy meetings were sometimes held in Catholic chapels. The mass of the poorest and most lawless class were Catholic, and occasions when they came together were often made use of for purposes of organisation. The Government in Ireland, however, with a steady and praiseworthy honesty, discouraged the rumours which represented the outrages as distinctively Popish. In 1786 Hely Hutchinson, who was then Secretary of State, declared with great emphasis in the Irish House of Commons that 'the Roman Catholic clergy had been treated with the utmost cruelty by the same insurgents and rioters that had insulted and injured many of the Protestant clergy;' and 'that the disturbances did not

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 37–41.

proceed from religious prejudices.'[1] One priest in the county of Kildare was buried up to his neck in brambles and thorns for having denounced the Whiteboys,[2] and a very considerable number of Protestants of the lower orders were implicated in the later outrages.[3] Arthur Young, in 1779, after a careful examination, gave it as his decisive opinion that no religious or political motives mingled with the disturbances; and that the only evidence that had been adduced to the contrary was that of informers 'of the most infamous and perjured characters.'[4] Lord Charlemont was strongly anti-Catholic in his sentiments, and he erroneously believed that the Whiteboys were exclusively Catholic, but his opinion about the causes of the disturbance was equally decided. 'The real causes,' he said, 'were . . . exorbitant rents, low wages, want of employment, farms of enormous extent let by their rapacious and indolent proprietors to monopolising land-jobbers, by whom small portions of them were again let and re-let to intermediate oppressors and by them subdivided for five times their value among the wretched starvers upon potatoes and water; taxes yearly increasing, and still more tithes, which the Catholic, without any possible benefit, unwillingly pays in addition to his priest's money; . . . misery, oppression, and famine.'[5]

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[1] Irish *Parliamentary Debates*, vi. 409, 445.

[2] Lewis, p. 31. Several other instances of the ill-usage of priests by the Whiteboys will be found in O'Leary's defence.—*Works*, p. 298.

[3] O'Leary's *Works*, pp. 296, 297. In the County of Cork some of these Protestants were brought to trial, and O'Leary quotes the statement of a Protestant clergyman, who was a magistrate in the county of Kerry, about the proceedings in that county: 'Many Protestants, though I thank my God mostly of the lower order, were engaged in tendering oaths, in procession by day and in outrages by night. . . . Nay, some of them were captains of these lawless corps, and have been obliged to fly from the prosecution that awaited them.'

[4] *Tour in Ireland*, i. 81–85.

[5] *MS. Autobiography.* I must

I have dwelt upon this point at some length, because the assertion that the Whiteboy disturbances were a kind of religious war has been repeated even to our own day. It owes its origin partly to the natural panic which spread through the few scattered Protestants of Munster, and partly also to political motives. Yet it is certain that a large part of the Catholics exerted themselves quite as much as the Protestants in suppressing the disturbances. In Kerry the most active person in arresting the Whiteboys was Lord Kenmare, the great Catholic nobleman of the county; and the Protestant clergy assembled at Tralee voted an address to him, thanking him for his admirable exertions for their protection.[1] In the county of Kilkenny the first effectual stand against the Whiteboys was made by the Catholic inhabitants of the little town of Ballyragget, who, at the cost of several lives, repelled a party who had attacked one of their houses.[2] The Catholics of Cork, at the very beginning of the disturbances, met to concert measures for their repression, and offered a large reward for the apprehension and conviction of the rioters.[3] Considering that the priests had usually sprung from the lower order of the people, and that they were wholly dependent upon them, they appear on the whole to have acted with great uprightness and courage. The Catholic bishop of Cloyne, in March 1762, issued a pastoral urging those of his diocese to use all the spiritual censures at their disposal for the purpose of repressing Whiteboyism; and some years later, Dr. Troy, who was then titular

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take this opportunity of expressing my acknowledgments to the present Lord Charlemont for permission to examine his very valuable collection of the papers of his great ancestor, and to Mr. J. P. Prendergast for much kindness which he has shown me in connection with them.

[1] O'Leary, pp. 297, 298.

[2] Arthur Young's *Tour*, i. 83, 84.

[3] Halifax to Egremont, April 17, 1762. Record Office.

bishop of Ossory, received the thanks of the Lord Lieutenant for his strenuous exertions in the same cause.[1] The Whiteboys were constantly excommunicated from the Catholic altars,[2] and one of the effects of the movement was for a time very seriously to diminish the influence of the priests. In some cases the chapel doors were actually nailed up against them by their congregations. Their dues were greatly diminished, and several were obliged to save themselves by a hasty flight.[3] A notion was spread abroad through Munster that if the Whiteboys for a time abandoned their own worship and attended the Protestant churches they would acquire, like the Protestants, the right of keeping arms in their possession, and this notion led to scenes which had never before been witnessed in Ireland. Catholic chapels for many months were almost deserted, while the quiet Protestant churches were thronged by wild and tattered congregations come to qualify themselves for midnight outrages, and hands were thrust into the baptismal font for holy water, and beads were counted, and Ave Marias repeated around the communion rails.[4]

The truth is, that the real causes of the Whiteboy outbreak are to be found on the surface. Extreme poverty, extreme ignorance, and extreme lawlessness made the people of a great part of the South of Ireland wholly indifferent to politics; but their condition was

[1] Lewis, pp. 30, 31.

[2] Ibid. Twiss's *Tour in Ireland*, p. 231.

[3] O'Leary's *Works*, pp. 302, 402. 'The populace,' wrote Bishop Woodward, 'have not only lost all fear of the magistrates, but have likewise shaken off that restraint which might be expected to take place from the remonstrances of the clergy of both persuasions. The authors of these disturbances, by pointing out to the misguided mob the secular Roman Catholic priests as extortioners in common with the established clergy, have entirely done away with that influence which on other occasions has been found useful in the prevention of outrages.' (P. 97.) See, *too*, Lewis, p. 30.

[4] O'Leary's *Works*, pp. 290, 291.

such that the slightest aggravation made it intolerable, and it had become so miserable that they were ready to resort to any violence to improve it. Perhaps the best picture of the condition of affairs is to be found in one of the reports of Robert Fitzgerald, the Knight of Kerry, a very active, and apparently a very able and upright magistrate of that county. 'The better sort of the Roman Catholics,' he says, 'seem extremely well affected to Government: the Popish bishop and clergy have exerted themselves in promoting this; the lower orders are in a state of distress beyond anything known in the memory of man. The great rents of this county belong to persons resident out of Ireland, whose agents are severe in collecting them; the lower class, upon whom the burthen falls, cannot dispose of their goods, for there are literally no buyers, the little money the country affords is carried off for absentees, and there is scarcely a guinea left. The miserable tenantry, when pressed by their landlords, bring them all their cattle, and having no grass for them, offer them at half-price, and the common people are actually in a state of despair, ready for any enterprise that might relieve their present suffering. In the three baronies, which are maritime, remote, and exceedingly mountainous, there are a great number who are indicted for various offences, and secure themselves from justice in their inaccessible mountains.' He suggests that if the skeleton of a regiment under command of officers of the county were formed, the people would gladly flock in multitudes to the standard of the King, and there would not be the smallest difficulty in filling the ranks. 'It seems,' he adds, 'to me equally certain that if the enemy should effect a landing anywhere within one hundred miles of these people they will most assuredly join them.'[1]

[1] Robert Fitzgerald (of Woodford, Rathkeale), Reports on the state of Kerry, July 27, 1779.—*State Papers: State of the*

The supineness with which the movement was at first regarded by the magistrates soon terminated, and the Irish Parliament passed a series of very severe enactments against the Whiteboys. By an Act of 1765, all persons who went by night in parties of five or more men wounding, beating, tying up, or otherwise assaulting human beings, destroying property, or digging up ground—all who were engaged in breaking open gaols or rescuing felons, and also all who imposed unlawful oaths by violence, were made liable to death, and stern measures were adopted to meet the connivance of the district. Unless the offenders were given up, or at least unless some evidence was given against them, the grand juries were empowered to levy on the barony in which a crime was committed a sum to compensate the injured person; and another clause, copying one of the enactments of the penal code against Papists, enabled any magistrate to summon before him any persons whom he suspected of having taken an illegal oath, examine them upon the subject, and imprison them for six months if they refused to answer. The Act was only for two years, but it was afterwards prolonged on the ground that it had 'greatly contributed to the peace and quiet of the kingdom.' But ten years later it was found necessary to make an additional law which, besides creating some new misdemeanours, immensely added to the list of

Country. Irish State Paper Office. Sir R. Aston writes: 'I believe, indeed, that if the Dey of Algiers had landed with any force and a stand of arms at such a time, people in such a temper of mind would have readily been induced to join him or a prince of any religion, either for the sake of revenge or exchange of state, rather than continue in their conceived wretchedness.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 39. In 1770 (Nov. 23), Townshend wrote to Weymouth: 'I hoped to be excused for representing to his Majesty the miserable situation of the lower ranks of his subjects in this kingdom. What from the rapaciousness of their unfeeling landlords and the restrictions on their trade, they are amongst the most wretched people on earth.' —Record Office.

capital offences. Among these were now reckoned maiming or disfiguring human beings, sending threatening letters, compelling men to quit their farms, habitations, or employments, or to join in Whiteboy offences, entering houses by force or menace between sunset and 6 A.M., in order to take horses, weapons, or money, and, finally, assisting or concealing Whiteboys who had committed any capital offence. The magistrates were given full powers of searching for arms, of obliging those who could give evidence to enter into recognisances to prosecute, and of compelling all suspected persons to answer their questions on oath. Nothing said on examination was to be used as evidence against these persons unless they were indicted for perjury; but, on the other hand, if they refused to answer or to prosecute when required, they were liable to an unlimited imprisonment.[1]

By the stringent enforcement of these Acts, and by the enrolment of large parties of volunteers under the command of the local magistrates, the Whiteboy organisation was, for a time at least, successfully stamped out over large districts. As might have been expected from the provocation, the repression was often very violent, and it is to be feared that acts of cruel, arbitrary, or unjust violence were not unfrequently committed.[2]

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[1] 5 George III. c. 8; 7 George III. c. 20; 15 and 16 George III. c. 21.

[2] See Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 43. Charlemont says that the hunting of Whiteboys became a fashionable chase, and that he had himself heard Lord Carrick exclaim with delight, 'I have blooded my young dog, I have fleshed my bloodhound,' after a successful hunt in which his son had participated.—*MS. Autobiography.* Sir Edward Loftus, one of the magistrates for the county Kilkenny, accused his brother magistrates of having in 1779 shamefully broken faith with some Whiteboys who surrendered on promise of amnesty. Several of these Whiteboys, he says, were tried for offences committed prior to their arrest, and one was sentenced to death.—*Book of Entries. Civil Petitions*, October, 1780, Irish Record Office.

In some districts, it is said, so many of the inhabitants fled in terror from their homes that the land remained untilled, and there were grave fears of a famine.[1] One of the strangest episodes of the Whiteboy period was the exuberant gratitude which was shown in Tipperary to Sir Richard Aston, the Chief Justice of Common Pleas, who appears to have shown in the trial of Whiteboy cases a moderation and humanity rarely found among the local magistrates. 'For about ten miles from Clonmel,' writes a contemporary Protestant historian, 'both sides of the road were lined with men, women, and children, who, as he passed along, kneeled down and supplicated Heaven to bless him as their protector and guardian angel.'[2]

One case of oppression has acquired a great prominence in Irish popular traditions, and it appears indeed to have been exceedingly flagrant. Nicholas Sheehy, the parish priest of Clogheen, in the county of Tipperary, was a man of very respectable parentage, and related to several of the Catholic gentry of the district. He was described by an historian of his own faith[3] as 'a giddy and officious, but not ill-meaning man, with somewhat of a quixotic cast of mind towards relieving all those within his district whom he fancied to be injured or oppressed,' and it is admitted that many hundreds of his parishioners were Whiteboys. Whether, as is very probable, Sheehy had been criminally mixed up with the movement, or whether he had simply set himself up as an opponent of acts of local oppression, it is now impossible to say, but it is certain that he had made himself in the highest degree obnoxious to the Protestant gentry of his neighbourhood, that he was more than once arrested, but released through want of

[1] *A Candid Enquiry into the late Riots in Munster* (1767), p. 23.

[2] Crawford's *History*, ii. 318.

[3] Curry.

evidence, that after his release he thought it necessary to leave his parish and retire for a time from observation, and that the Government considered the *primâ facie* case against him sufficiently strong to offer a reward of 300*l.* for his apprehension. The proclamation promising this reward came under his notice, and Sheehy at once wrote from his concealment offering to surrender to be tried 'for any crime he was accused of,' on condition that he was not tried at Clonmel, 'where he feared the power and malice of his enemies were too prevalent for justice,' but at the King's Bench, at Dublin. The offer was believed to have been accepted,[1] and after a delay of nearly eleven months, Sheehy was brought to trial in February 1766, on the charge of 'inciting to riot and rebellion.' The only three witnesses against him were persons of infamous character, and the Dublin jury disbelieved their very explicit testimony, and after a trial which lasted fourteen hours, acquitted the prisoner.

He was not, however, allowed to leave the court, but was at once detained on the accusation of having instigated Whiteboys to murder John Bridge. This man was a Whiteboy, who under the influence of flogging had con-

[1] The contemporary narrative of Curry, which has been generally followed, states that the offer was positively accepted. There is, however, a letter in the Irish Record Office from Mr. Waite, the Secretary at the Castle, to Sheehy (March 5, 1765), in the following terms: 'Sir,—Yesterday I received your letter from Ballyporeen with the two papers inclosed therein, and having laid the same before the Lords Justices, their Excellencies have commanded me to acquaint you, that if you will surrender yourself to Mr. O'Callaghan you may depend upon his receiving and treating you with all civility, and that you will by him be transmitted in the most private manner to Dublin with the utmost security and safety to your person. I write to him for that purpose this night by order of the Lords Justices, and you may be assured that upon your arrival here, *you will meet, not only with the justice you desire*, but with such further regard as your candid behaviour may deserve.'—*Book of Entries, Civil Petitions.*

sented to turn King's evidence, had accused Sheehy and several others of being mixed up in the conspiracy, and had afterwards disappeared suddenly. His body was never found. It was sworn on the trial that he had expressed his intention of flying from the country, and though it is probable he was murdered, the fact cannot be said to have been ever positively established.[1] In spite of the implied promise Sheehy was tried by his enemies at Clonmel, and the trial appears to have been one of the most scandalous ever known in Ireland. The most important witnesses were the three whose testimony had already been discredited by a Dublin jury. A party of horse surrounded the court and admitted or excluded those whom they pleased, and the intimidation exercised was such that the attorney of Sheehy found it necessary to leave Clonmel by night. The chief witness for Sheehy was a person named Keating, of known property and credit in the county, who swore in the clearest and most emphatic manner that Sheehy had been lodging in his house on the night when the crime was supposed to have been committed, and could not possibly have been present. Immediately after he had given this evidence a clergyman who was the chief manager of

[1] O'Leary afterwards said that there was a report that Bridge had been seen in Newfoundland, but he is careful to add that he cannot vouch for this being the case (O'Leary's *Works*, p. 282); and a letter written by Sheehy to Major Sirr the night before the execution (which Madden believes to be certainly genuine) confesses that Bridge had been murdered, and that Sheehy knew the fact, though probably only by the confessional. He protests very earnestly his innocence, but says, 'the accusers and the accused are equally ignorant of the fact, as I have been informed, but after such a manner I received the information that I cannot make use of it for my own preservation; the fact is that John Bridge was destroyed by two alone, who strangled him on Wednesday night, October 24, 1764. I was then from home, and only returned home the 28th, and heard that he had disappeared.'—Madden's *United Irishman*. (1st series, pp. 57, 58.)

the trial rose and informed the court that Keating had been engaged in a Whiteboy affray in which two soldiers had been killed. The effect of such a proceeding at such a moment may be easily imagined. Keating was at once carried away to Kilkenny gaol. His evidence was utterly discredited, and several witnesses who had come to give evidence for the prisoner were so intimidated that they left the court. Keating was afterwards tried at Kilkenny, chiefly on the evidence of the same witnesses who gave testimony against Sheehy, and he was honourably acquitted, but before that time Sheehy was in his grave. The unhappy priest was found guilty, hanged, and quartered. With his last breath on the scaffold he protested his absolute innocence of the charge for which he suffered.

He may not have been altogether the innocent martyr that he has been represented, but there can be little doubt that his trial was infamously partial, and it is probable that he was wholly guiltless of the murder of Bridge. The circumstances of the trial, and the fact that Sheehy alone of the Whiteboy victims was in holy orders, left a deep and lasting resentment in the popular mind. The grave of Sheehy was honoured like that of a saint. A Sheehy jury became a proverbial expression in Ireland for scandalous partiality. Stories were collected and believed of how all the chief persons connected with the tragedy came to some unhappy end, and the executioner of Sheehy was, some years later, murdered in a fierce popular outbreak.[1]

[1] The fullest contemporary accounts of this case are to be found in Exshaw's *Magazine*, June 1776; in Curry's *State of the Catholics*; and in *An Inquiry into the Causes of the late Riots in Munster*, published anonymously by Curry in 1766. Mr. Madden (*United Irishman*, 1st series) has taken great pains to collect all the extant evidence relating to the case. A year after the execution of Sheehy some informers at Kilkenny asserted that the Whiteboy movement was a plot for the Pretender, origi-

While the Whiteboy disturbances were spreading widely among the Catholic peasantry of Munster and part of Leinster, other disorders, which seemed at first scarcely less serious, broke out among the Protestants of the North. The Oakboys appear to have first risen against the Road Act, which ordered that all highways should be repaired by the personal labour of the housekeepers. It was stated that the landed proprietors, who constituted the grand juries, had many roads made which were of little or no use to the community at large, and were intended for the exclusive benefit of their own estates, and that they threw the chief burden of making and repairing these roads on the poorer ratepayers. In addition to this grievance, the question of tithes had recently acquired in the North, as well as in the South, a new prominence. It was acknowledged that tithes were much lighter in the North of Ireland than in the South, and that the customary rate was considerably below the strict legal rate, but some clergymen had recently endeavoured to break down the custom of the country. Dr. Clarke, the Rector of Armagh, appears to have been the first to try the experiment, and he discovered that it was possible by a stricter exaction of tithes to raise his ecclesiastical revenue from 900*l.* to 1,300*l.* a year. The example was followed by others, and it was justified on the ground that the price of living had so largely increased that a curate with 40*l.* a year in the beginning of the reign of George II. was at least as well off as a curate with 80*l.* a year in the beginning of the reign of George III.[1] Tithes had long

nated chiefly by the Archbishop of Cashel, paid for by the French King and sanctioned by a Papal Bull, and they described Sheehy as one of the chief accomplices. As I have already mentioned, however, the Government never attached the smallest credence to these depositions (which will be found in Musgrave), and none of the persons accused were brought to trial.

[1] Caldwell's *Debates* (1763-1764), pp. 68, 69.

been paid with much reluctance in Ulster, and the clergy had often, without any actual violence, been grossly defrauded of their rights. Thus it frequently happened that the farmers of a large and scattered parish, though they cut their corn at different times, agreed to give notice to the clergyman that they would all draw it on the same day; and as they refused to furnish him with any horses to secure his share he was obliged either to leave it on the field, where it was sure to be wasted, spoiled, or stolen, or to compound for his tithes at perhaps a fourth part of the value.[1]

It was in the summer of 1763 that bodies of men, sometimes 400 or 500 strong, assembled to the sound of a horn, wearing oak boughs in their hats. They erected gallows, attacked houses, compelled clergymen to swear that they would not levy more than a specified proportion of tithe, and laymen that they would not assess the county at more than a stipulated rate, entered into an engagement to make no more high roads, and assaulted all whom they found working on the roads. Dr. Clarke was seized and carried in derision through various parts of the country, and many of the clergy were compelled to take refuge within the walls of Derry.[2] The flame spread rapidly through Armagh, Tyrone, Derry, and Fermanagh; but no very serious crimes were committed, and the Protestant rising of the North was wholly free from the atrocious cruelty which disgraced the Catholic insurgents of the South. It arose among a people who were much less wretched and much less ignorant. Their tithes, even at the worst, were more

[1] See the curious speech of Andrews, M.P. for Londonderry. —Caldwell, pp. 78, 79.

[2] Caldwell, p. 82. That very excellent and able man, Philip Skelton, who was rector of a parish near Enniskillen, was one of the many clergymen who were compelled by the Oakboys to fly from their parishes. He took refuge in Dublin.—Burdy's *Life of Skelton*, pp. lxxxix, xc.

moderate than in Munster, and the Protestants were not, like the Catholics, deprived of all legitimate means of expressing their will. The Government appear to have acted with great wisdom and moderation, and a letter of Primate Stone is preserved which is exceedingly honourable to that much-abused prelate, and shows his great desire to limit as much as possible the severities that were necessary.[1] Charlemont, as Governor of Armagh, took an active and successful part in restoring tranquillity in his county. The whole movement was suppressed with very little bloodshed, and a new and more equitable Road Act restored in a few months peace to the North.[2]

Another and more formidable, though less extensive, outbreak, occurred about eight years later in the counties of Antrim and Down, and was mainly attributed to the oppression of a single man. The Marquis of Donegal was one of the largest proprietors in the North of Ireland. He was an absentee, and when his leases fell in, instead of adopting the usual plan of renewing them at a moderate increase of rent, he determined to raise a sum which was stated at no less than 100,000*l.* in fines upon his tenants, and as they were utterly unable to pay them, two or three rich merchants of Belfast were preferred to them. The improvements were confiscated, the land was turned into pasture, and the whole population of a vast district were driven from their homes.[3] This case, though the most flagrant, was

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[1] Hardy's *Charlemont*, i. 190, 191.

[2] Hardy's *Charlemont*, i. 185–192; Crawford's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 319–321; Arthur Young's *Tour; Account of the Progress of Charles Coote, Esq., in Pursuing and Defeating the Oakboys in the Counties of Monaghan and Fermanagh* (Dublin, 1763).

[3] Report of Captain Erskine (of Lord Drogheda's Light Dragoons, quartered at Dungannon), April 10, 1772. Captain Erskine says: 'Should the causes of the present riots be looked into, it

by no means the only one, and on several estates in the North, during the last ten or fifteen years, rents had been increased to such a point that the tenants were unable to pay them. They alleged that it was a frequent custom for landlords, when leases fell in, to 'publish in newspapers or otherwise that such a parcel of land is to be set, and that proposals in writing will be received for it. By this means they invite every covetous, envious, and malicious person to offer for his neighbour's possessions and improvements. The trembling tenant, well knowing that he must be the highest bidder or turn out (he knows not whither), is under an unavoidable necessity of offering more than the value, because the doing so is become a general practice.' They complained that they were reduced to extreme poverty and distress by the over-setting of their lands, that some who refused to pay extravagant rents were ejected and replaced by 'Papists who will promise any rent,' that the county taxes had been lately increased to an intolerable degree, and had been notoriously 'applied to private purposes,' and that 'many of the greatest landlords who do these things are absentees, as are also many of the clergy who levy the tithes.'[1]

will be found that few have had juster foundation.' Lord Townshend sent this report to the Government in England as the work of 'a very cool, dispassionate, sensible man, without prejudices or partialities.' It is corroborated by Wesley's *Journal*, June 1773. See, too, Walpole's *Last Journals*, i. 75. An attempt to defend or palliate the conduct of Lord Donegal has been made in Mr. Benn's valuable *History of Belfast*, pp. 611–620. Mr. Benn states on the authority of Lord Donegal's present agent, that the sum Erskine stated to have been paid in fines (100,000*l.*), was a gross exaggeration, and that the fines exacted did not really amount to 20,000*l.*, but he admits that the rent of arable land near Belfast was raised from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 8*s.* an acre. Arthur Young thought that the case against Lord Donegal was exaggerated or untrue, and that the main cause of the distress was the depression of the linen trade.—*Tour in Ireland*, ii. 131.

[1] Petition of the Hearts of

These statements were perfectly true.[1] It is certain that the competition for land, aggravated by the inveterate habit of subletting, had reduced a great part of Ulster to intolerable misery. Improvements to which tenants had a strong equitable claim were remorselessly confiscated; and grand juries, which are now among the purest and most efficient branches of Irish administration, were at that time, and in Ulster at least, exceedingly corrupt. Townshend, who was then Lord Lieutenant, described 'the very high price which gentlemen put upon their lands, and, of course, the great oppression which the lower order of people labour under in those parts, as the probable cause of the present discontent.' 'The truth,' he says, 'is, neither the laws nor provincial justice are administered here as in England. Neither the quarter sessions nor grand juries give the county the same speedy relief or maintain the like respect as with us. The chief object of the grand juries is to dispose of the county cesses as best suits their party views and private convenience. The sums raised by these gentlemen throughout the kingdom do not amount to less than 130,000*l.* per annum, which is levied upon the tenantry, the lower classes of whom are in a state of poverty not to be described.'[2]

Steel. Humble Remonstrance of the Protestants of the Northern Parts of the Kingdom of Ireland, signed by 'A Protestant Draper.' —Record Office.

[1] The Presbytery of Temple Patrick published at Belfast in January 1774 an address to their people, urging them to desist from outrages; but they at the same time 'lament the heavy oppression that too many are under, from the excessive price of lands, and the unfriendly practice of many who contribute to that oppression by proposing for their neighbour's possessions, by which means they are too often deprived of the improvements made by their forefathers and themselves.' Lord Townshend said these lines gave a true account of the origin of the disturbances.—Record Office.

[2] Townshend to Rochford, March 18, 1772, Record Office. Captain Erskine says: 'It is well known that over most parts

The conduct of Lord Donegal brought the misery of the Ulster peasantry to a climax, and in a short time many thousands of ejected tenants, banded together under the name of Steelboys, were in arms. They were mainly, at first almost exclusively, Presbyterians.[1] Their distress was much greater than that of the Oak-boys, who preceded them, and, as is usually the case, their violence was proportioned to their distress. They destroyed or maimed great numbers of cattle. They attacked many houses, and were guilty of many kinds of violence, and they soon administered illegal oaths, and undertook the part of general reformers. One of their number being confined at Belfast, a large body of Steelboys, accompanied by many thousands of peasants, who neither before nor after took any part in the insurrection, marched upon that town and succeeded in obtaining his surrender. Large bodies of soldiers were soon sent to the disturbed districts, and several Steel-boys were tried at Carrickfergus, but by the supposed partiality of the juries they were acquitted. The Parliament then passed an Act authorising the removal of the trials from the disturbed counties to the city or county of Dublin, and some rioters were accordingly tried at Dublin, but the feeling against the new law was so strong that they were acquitted. In December 1773, Parliament retraced its steps and repealed the

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of the county the lands are subset six deep, so that those who actually labour it are squeezed to the very utmost. It is equally notorious what use is made by grand juries of the powers given them to levy cess for making roads and bridges. Jobs upon jobs, the one more infamous than another, serve to support the interest of some leading men in the country.'—Ibid.

[1] In the very remarkable petition which the Steelboys drew up recounting their grievances, they describe themselves as 'all Protestants and Protestant dissenters.' Lord Townshend, however, says that Papists and men of all professions except Quakers soon joined them.—Townshend to Rochford, March 18, 1772.

obnoxious Act. From this time the insurrection speedily subsided, and after some fierce conflicts with the soldiers many insurgents were taken, tried, and executed.

The complete subsidence of this formidable insurrection in the North forms a remarkable contrast to the persistence with which the Whiteboy disturbances in the South continued to smoulder during many generations. It is to be largely attributed to the great Protestant emigration which had long been taking place in Ulster. The way had been opened, and the ejected tenantry who formed the Steelboy bands and who escaped the sword and the gallows, fled by thousands to America. They were soon heard of again. In a few years the cloud of civil war which was already gathering over the colonies burst, and the ejected tenants of Lord Donegal formed a large part of the revolutionary armies which severed the New World from the British Crown.[1]

While these events were occurring in some of the counties most remote from the capital, a strong political life was arising in the chief centres of population, and beginning to show itself clearly in the debates of Parliament. The growth of a middle class, the evanescence of the old passions of civil war, the great decline of religious intolerance, and the sudden rise of a free press, conspired to stimulate it. The political passions roused by the struggle of 1753 had not wholly subsided, and the dissolution which followed the accession of George III. introduced a new element into Irish politics.

It was scarcely possible, indeed, that the contagion of English liberty should not have spread to Ireland,

[1] Gordon, Plowden, Crawford, Mullalla. Benn's *History of Belfast*, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1772, pp. 454–461. 1773, p. 467.

and that its political condition should not have appeared intolerable to those Irishmen who derived their notions of freedom from the English Constitution. The Parliament, as we have seen, lasted an entire reign, and that of George II. had sat for thirty-three years. About two-thirds of the revenue of the country, including the quit-rents, the hearth-money, and the greater part of the customs and excise, was included in the Hereditary Revenue which had been settled in perpetuity and was therefore beyond the control of Parliament.[1] Parliament only sat every second year, and could only legislate in combination with two other bodies, deliberating in secret, and appointed by the Crown. Heads of Bills arising in either House first passed to the Irish Privy Council, which might either suppress them altogether, or alter them as it pleased. If this body thought fit to throw them into the form of a Bill, it at once transmitted that Bill to England, where it was submitted to the examination of a committee of the English Privy Council, assisted by the English Attorney-General, and this body, like the Irish Privy Council, had an unlimited power of suppressing or altering it. If the Bill passed through this second ordeal it was returned with such changes, additions and diminutions as the two Privy Councils had made, to the House of Parliament in which it took its rise, and it then passed for the first time to the other House. Neither House, however, had now the power of altering it, and each House was therefore reduced to the alternative of rejecting it altogether, or accepting it in the exact form in which it had been returned from England.[2] The British Legislature claimed the right of binding Ireland by its acts. The judges only held their seats during pleasure. The

[1] See vol. i. 192, 193.

[2] See Howard, *On the Revenue of Ireland*, ii. 233–235.

right of supreme and final judicature in Irish cases had been taken from the Irish House of Lords and transferred to that of England. There was no Habeas Corpus Act, no national militia, no Irish Mutiny Act, no Act obliging members of Parliament who accepted places or pensions under the Crown to vacate their seats.

Such a state of things could hardly fail in settled times to rouse a spirit of resistance among the Irish Protestants. It appeared tolerable only while the country was still heaving in the convulsions of civil war, while property was utterly insecure, and while the religious conflict was at its height. The grievance was by no means a merely speculative one. The suppression by law of the most important manufactures of Ireland, the ruinous restrictions imposed on Irish commerce, the systematic appointment of Englishmen to nearly all the highest and most lucrative posts in the ecclesiastical, legal, and political establishments, the employment of the Irish Pension List to reward persons who had done no kind of service to Ireland, were all largely, if not entirely, due to the small power which the Irish gentry had in the government of their country. An active Press had lately arisen, and there were already several able men, both in Parliament and beyond its pale, who, following in the steps of Molyneux, aspired to make the Irish Parliament in Irish affairs what the English Parliament was in English ones, and to secure for the Irish Protestants all those constitutional rights which the Revolution of 1688 had established in England, and of which the English people were so justly proud. Rigby, who took a leading part in Irish affairs during the administration of the Duke of Bedford, noticed in the beginning of 1760 the general unwillingness to acknowledge the dependence of the Irish on the British Legislature, and the growing, though as yet vague, discontent

which was abroad. There was not, he thought, any settled plan for asserting legislative independence, 'but to be uneasy in their present state, and to express among themselves this uneasiness is the turn and fashion of the upper sort of the people, and is caught from them downwards;' and he found it as common among Protestants as among Catholics.[1] 'People of all ranks,' wrote the Lords Justices from Dublin, immediately after the accession of George III., 'here, as well as in other places, are more curious and inquisitive into business than they were formerly, and more prepared to take advantage of inaccuracies either of substance or form,' and they complained on the eve of the election that the practice of exacting new tests from the representatives 'has been early set on foot, and is daily spreading itself in all parts.'[2] 'Formerly,' wrote the Irish Chancellor Bowes to a prominent English politician, 'Protestant or Papist were the key words; they are now court or country, referring still to constitutional grievances.' 'They have considered your House as the model, and in general think themselves injured in the instances in which theirs, upon the legal constitution, must differ.'[3]

The system of government by Undertakers, or, in other words, by a few great personages who possessed an extraordinary parliamentary influence, and who 'undertook' to carry the King's business through Parliament on condition of obtaining a large share of the disposal of patronage, still continued. Lord Shannon and Primate Stone were now cordially united, and being steadily supported by Ponsonby, the Speaker of the

[1] Bedford *Correspondence*, ii. xxix.

[2] Representation of the Lords Justices (Stone, Shannon, and Ponsonby), reprinted in Gerald Hamilton's *Works*, pp. 114, 130.

[3] Bowes to Dodington. Adolphus' *History of England*, i. 592.

House of Commons, and usually by Lord Kildare, they had acquired a complete ascendency in the Irish Parliament and Privy Council. The influence of Lord Shannon had been greatly increased by the conflict of 1753, for, though he had been driven from power by the Duke of Dorset, he regained in the succeeding Viceroyalty all that he had lost, and the Government purchased his assistance by an earldom and a large pension. There was a general conviction that, though he might be for a time disgraced, every Administration would be eventually obliged to resort to his assistance, and the fidelity to his friends,[1] which was the best point in his character, secured him a large and steady following. In conjunction with Stone and Ponsonby, he was Lord Justice at the accession of George III.

The power of the Undertakers was largely, though not exclusively, due to the fact that the Lord Lieutenant only resided in the country for six months in two years, while Parliament was sitting, and that the chief efficient power had passed in consequence to the Lords Justices, who governed in his absence. In England the royal influence was supposed to be most strong at the time when Parliament was in vacation. In Ireland it was noticed that it was precisely at this period that aristocratic influence attained its height, for in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant the administration of affairs was wholly in the hands of a few great men who were virtually the leaders of the House of Commons.[2] At the same time the power of the Undertakers was less absolute than has been imagined, and it is, I think, a complete misconception to regard them as a peculiar product of Irish politics. The great Irish families only reproduced on a smaller scale the political ascendency

[1] Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 129.

[2] Knox's *Semi-Official Papers*. Appendix No. 1.

which the Pelhams and a few other families had obtained in England during the comparative eclipse of the royal authority which followed the accession of the House of Hanover. Even the term 'Undertakers' was sometimes employed in England to designate the great Whig families,[1] and the position of Lord Shannon in the one country was not very unlike that of Newcastle in the other. In each country family relationships and connections, the acquisition of much borough influence, and a considerable dexterity in party management, had enabled a few men to make themselves the necessary channel of the favours of the Crown. In each case this oligarchical connection was unpopular with the people on account of its narrowness and corruption, while it became a great object of the Crown to dissolve it as one of the chief limitations of royal power. In each case the oligarchical leaders were thrown into temporary alliance with the people, and in each case more corruption was employed to overturn their ascendency than had ever been required to maintain it.

It is of course true that the distinctive evils of the Undertakers were greater in Ireland than they had ever been in England. In a Parliament in which at least two-thirds of the seats consisted of small boroughs at the disposal of a very few individuals; in a country in which the great majority of the population were absolutely excluded from political privileges, there was necessarily a concentration of political power, and an absence of political control that had never, in the worst times, been equalled in England. Yet at the same time the government by Undertakers was by no means without its advantages, and the period in which it flourished is very far from being the worst in Irish history. In a country situated like Ireland, it was no

[1] See *Hist. of England*, iii. 179, 181.

small matter that two out of the three Lord Justices who usually governed should be Irishmen, and should be able to fill a large proportion of the subordinate places of power and profit with followers who were at least natives of the soil. The formation of a connected influence in the Irish Parliament binding many isolated and individual interests into a coherent and powerful organisation, was a real step towards parliamentary government, and it was probably very conducive to the good relations between the two countries that there should be something between the purely Irish party who wished to overthrow all English parliamentary ascendency, and the English ministers who only cared for English party interests and for English public opinion. The government by Undertakers was government by an extremely small oligarchy, but it was at least a government by resident Irish gentlemen who possessed that first requisite of successful administration—a thorough knowledge of the very peculiar condition of their country and of the very peculiar character of its people. A purely aristocratic government has many faults, but it at least saves a nation from the two greatest calamities that can befall it—from government by fanatics and experimentalists, and from government by gamblers and adventurers. Ireland under the Undertakers enjoyed many years of almost uninterrupted peace. The whole military establishment was only 12,000 men, and there was then no semi-military constabulary force to assist it. Yet in every period of war or threatened war it was found possible to withdraw a great portion of the army from Ireland for the general defence of the Empire. However the fact may be explained, it is evident that there was no serious or general disaffection. There was no doubt much corruption, but it is not clear that there was more than in England; and when it is remembered that members of Parliament held their seats for a whole reign,

and were therefore practically uncontrolled by their constituents, it appears to me somewhat surprising that it was not even greater. It is, at all events, certain that the great period of political corruption in Ireland was not the period of the Undertakers but that which immediately followed their overthrow.

The chief reproach that was directed against the Irish Parliament of this time was its excessive expenditure in public works, such as inland navigation, collieries, bounties to manufactures, and the frequency with which these grants were due to private and often corrupt motives. This profusion was partly owing to the failure of the Parliament of 1753, to assert its authority over the surplus which had accumulated, which made succeeding Parliaments determine that no such surplus should again accrue.[1] It was stated in the Irish Parliament that in the two Sessions before 1753, 400*l.* in each session was thought a sufficient bounty for public works, but that in the succeeding ten years not less than 400,000*l.* had been voted for such purposes.[2] During the four succeeding years the grants continued to increase. There was also, it is said, a strong desire so to burden the hereditary revenue, that it should never again be sufficient to enable the Sovereign to govern without the assistance of Parliament. This end was effectually attained by the practice of voting bounties or other charges without imposing any specific taxes for paying them, thus throwing them upon the revenue at large. The most flagrant instance of this procedure was the very strange tillage law which was carried under the Duke of Bedford, granting in perpetuity a bounty for the carriage of corn to Dublin. Its principle was to bring the Dublin market to the farmer's door by paying

[1] See Lord Clare's *Speech on the Union*, p. 28.

[2] Caldwell's *Debates*, p. 377.

the carriage at the public expense, and in a few years the bounty amounted to no less than 50,000*l.* a year. The conduct of Bedford in advising the Government of George II. to assent to the imposition of this heavy and perpetual burden upon the hereditary revenue, was regarded in the succeeding reign as the worst instance in Irish history of the surrender of the power and influence of the Crown.[1] The numerous minor and casual Acts, giving assistance from public funds to canals, bridges, mills, piers, or other public works, appear, according to much concurrent testimony, to have caused a great deal of political corruption. Political partisans were greatly favoured; sometimes the grants were not even applied to the purposes for which they were designated, and it was partly by such subsidies that the Undertakers kept their party together.[2] At the same time, it is an unquestionable fact that the expenditure of the Irish Government was much more moderate, and the state of the finances much more satisfactory under the Undertakers than in the period that immediately followed. At the beginning of the last war Ireland had no foreign debt, and no new duties had been imposed upon the

[1] Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 138, 139. Gordon's *History of Ireland*, ii. 235.

[2] See Lord Clare's *Speech on the Union*, p. 28. Knox's *Extra Official Papers*, Bedford's *Correspondence*, iii. 322, and the abstracts of the letters of Sir J. Caldwell in the *Lansdowne Papers*, British Museum, Add. MSS. 24, 137. A detailed report of the sums voted for public works from 1751 to 1767 will be found in the Commons' *Journals*, xiv. 540–552. Much the greater part seems to have been expended on inland navigation, and the grants do not appear on the face of them either excessive or misapplied. At one time special grants were given to particular manufacturers, and this, as might be expected, gave rise to great jobbing; but the House of Commons, in 1763, resolved that no more such grants should be given, though a sum of 8,000*l.* or 10,000*l.* was usually voted to the Dublin Society to be expended in premiums. See Caldwell's *Debates*, pp. 303–307, 437–442, 521.

kingdom in the whole period between 1727 and 1763.[1]

Immediately after the accession of George III. an angry controversy broke out between the Irish Lords Justices and Privy Council on the one side, and the English Privy Council on the other, about the propriety of sending a Money Bill to England as a reason for calling the new Parliament. In order to explain the nature of this question it will be necessary to recapitulate very shortly a few facts in the earlier constitutional history of Ireland.

The dependence of the Irish Parliament rested chiefly on the well-known Act of Henry VII., called Poynings' Law, which was enacted by a Parliament summoned at Drogheda in 1495 by the English deputy, Sir Edward Poynings, for the purpose of restraining the Yorkist tendencies of the Anglo-Irish colonists. One portion of this famous Act made those laws, which previous to this date had been enacted in England, binding in Ireland. The other, with which we are now especially concerned, provided that all the 'causes and considerations' for calling a Parliament in Ireland, and all the Bills which were to be brought forward during its Session, must be previously certified to the King by the chief Governor and Council of Ireland, and affirmed by the King and his Council under the Great Seal of England, and that any proceedings of an Irish Parliament which had not been so certified and affirmed before that Parliament was assembled, should be null and void. By an Act of Philip and Mary this arrangement was slightly modified, for the Irish Privy Council was empowered to send over proposed Bills for the approbation of the English Privy Council at a time when the Irish Parliament was actually in session.

[1] Caldwell's *Debates*, p. 537. 330. Barrow's *Life and Writings* Crawford's *History of Ireland*, ii. *of Lord Macartney*, ii. 127.

In this manner the Irish Parliament was absolutely precluded from originating any legislative measures, and its sole power was that of accepting or rejecting such measures as were laid before it under the sanction of the Great Seal of England. Gradually, however, and rather by custom than by express enactment, the power of legislative initiative was restored to it. Under Charles I. the Irish Houses of Parliament took upon them to be 'humble remembrancers' to the Irish Privy Council of what Bills it was proper to certify to England. This proceeding appears to have at first taken the form of an address to the Lord Lieutenant and Council containing a general proposition for a Bill, but soon the custom began of either House framing, not, indeed, Bills, which would be contrary to Poynings' Act, but 'heads of Bills,' which passed from it to the Irish Privy Council, and thence, if approved of, to England. These heads of Bills precisely resembled Acts of Parliament except that they began with the formulary 'We pray that it may be enacted,' instead of the formulary 'Be it enacted.' The origination of Bills in the Privy Council became rarer and rarer, and it at last wholly ceased, except in the single case of the summoning of a new Parliament. In accordance with Poynings' Act, two or more Bills were then sent over to England as a cause for summoning a new Parliament, and it was customary that one of these Bills should be a Bill of Supply.[1]

The right of the Privy Council to originate on this occasion ordinary Bills was generally acquiesced in, but the Bill of Supply was looked upon with extreme jealousy, and was sometimes angrily rejected by Parliament. The distinction made in Ireland between Supply Bills and other Bills was the same as that which was subse-

[1] See *Plain Reasons for Remodelling Poynings' Law*, Dublin, 1780. Lord Mountmorres' *History of the Irish Parliament*, i. 48–59, ii. 142. Howard on the *Irish Revenue*, ii. 233–236.

quently made in America and in the speeches of Chatham. A Money Bill, it was said, is by the theory of the Constitution a free grant made by the Commons to the Sovereign, and it is therefore plainly unconstitutional that it should take its rise in a body which is neither virtually nor professedly representative. On the accession of George III. the Lords Justices, speaking in their own name and in that of the Irish Privy Council, contended, in an able and elaborate representation, that this custom of sending over a Money Bill as a cause for summoning a Parliament was inexpedient and ought to be abandoned. They stated that such a Bill would be surely rejected in Parliament, and that in the existing condition of men's minds it would create a ferment at the beginning of the new reign which would speedily be diffused through the whole kingdom. Anthony Malone, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, strenuously supported this view; but the great influence of Lord Kildare was thrown into the opposite scale. The English Privy Council refused to depart from the former precedents, and the Irish Lords Justices at once asked to be relieved of their functions. It is remarkable that Pitt in this contest separated from his colleagues, and defended the Irish Commons.[1]

After considerable discussion, the Lords Justices consented to certify and to support the Bill, and it was carried without difficulty through Parliament. The Government marked their victory by dismissing Malone from the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, and by bestowing a marquisate on the Earl of Kildare, who five years later attained the still higher rank of Duke of Leinster.[2]

The election which took place on the accession of

[1] Walpole's *George III.* i. 31.

[2] Hamilton's *Works*, pp. 105–160; Adolphus, i. 161, 162; Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 141.

George III. excited an interest that had been for many generations unequalled in Ireland. The long period which had elapsed since a new Parliament had assembled, and the great changes that during that period had taken place in the social and political condition of the country, gave it an extraordinary significance. There were public meetings, resolutions of corporate bodies, and, above all, stringent tests imposed upon candidates. The Irish people were, as a whole, undoubtedly greatly inferior to the English in political knowledge and capacity; but this inferiority hardly extended to the open constituencies, for the electors were drawn from a small ascendant caste who formed a kind of aristocracy in the nation. Ireland, which was already represented in the English Parliament by Barré, and a very few years later by Burke, had reserved for her own Parliament no small amount of political ability. Sir J. Caldwell, who was one of the most intelligent members of the first Irish Parliament of George III., was so struck with the high character of the debates, that he published reports of those which took place in 1763 and 1764, which appear to me in debating power and solid good sense to compare not at all unfavourably with the English parliamentary debates of the same period.[1] A study of the ephemeral political literature will, I think, confirm this impression of the large amount of political ability existing in the country. The 'Querist' of Berkeley, independently of its great intrinsic merits, had been extremely useful in Ireland as a model of political discussion. It made it the fashion to condense the essential arguments in politics into the simplest, shortest, and

[1] *Debates relating to the Affairs of Ireland in* 1763 *to* 1764, by a Military Officer. See on Caldwell, *Almon's Biographical Anecdotes*, i. 120–181. Sir James Caldwell also reported some debates in the English Parliament in 1762, which are printed in the Cavendish *Debates*, i. 561–575.

most unrhetorical form. It was imitated by many writers, and several of the political pamphlets of the first twenty years of George III. are models of weighty and luminous discussion. Unfortunately, the letters of Junius introduced a new fashion, and the terse and simple style of Berkeley and Swift was too commonly exchanged for the sonorous generalities, the laboured declamations, the unmeasured invective of 'Baritariana.'

The Parliament was, of course, mainly a Parliament of landlords, and the immense multiplication of nomination boroughs had placed the controlling power in a few hands. Property was largely, perhaps extravagantly, represented;[1] but the debating power of the Irish House of Commons was chiefly due to the very unusual number of lawyers who sat in it.[2] Anthony Malone, who had long been the foremost man in the profession, was now in the decline of life, and although his quarrel with the Government was soon terminated, he does not appear to have taken a very conspicuous part under George III. The foremost place in the

[1] I cannot, however, believe the statement made by the Chancellor Bowes in a letter to Doddington. 'Probably their representatives [those of Ireland] in Parliament have been possessed of more property than yours in Great Britain, in proportion to numbers, without taking in the disproportion of wealth in the two kingdoms.' This is of a piece with his other extraordinary assertion, that since the Hanover succession 'Ireland has been the most flourishing state in Europe!' —Adolphus, i. 592.

[2] 'We have in the House of Commons of this our new Parliament more of that considerable and learned body of the long robe than any man now living can remember; nay, more than appears in any journals or any history extant in this or any other kingdom upon earth; and several of them of superior abilities, great eminence in their profession, and of noted honour and integrity.'—*Queries relative to the Defects and Grievances in the Laws of Ireland* (Dublin, 1761), p. 30. In a pamphlet published during the next Parliament, it was said that there were then more than eighty lawyers in the Irish House of Commons.—*Present State of Ireland* (London, 1780), p. 121.

Government ranks was conceded to Hely Hutchinson, the Prime Sergeant, an inveterate place-hunter, but a man of brilliant and versatile ability, and at the same time of great political tact and moderation. In spite of his general support of the Government he voted for many of the popular measures, such as free trade, the claim of right, the abrogation of a large part of the penal laws, and the reform of Parliament, and his influence on other questions appears to have been usually employed to moderate and assuage.[1] He is one of the very earliest politicians in the three kingdoms who show clear traces of the influence of Adam Smith, and he wrote a work on the commercial disabilities of Ireland, which is one of the best specimens of political literature produced in Ireland in the latter half of the eighteenth century.[2] He

[1] Gerard Hamilton, who long co-operated with Hutchinson, said of him that 'Ireland never bred a more able, nor any country a more honest man' (Grenville *Papers*, iv. 110). Townshend considered him 'by far the most powerful man in Parliament, of great abilities to conduct a debate,' and added that he 'holds but little that is dependent upon Government, has great profits from his profession, and is most essential to Government.' — Townshend to Shelburne, December 12, 1767. (Record Office.) Harcourt described him as 'a man of an excellent private character . . . of first-rate abilities, great knowledge, learning, and experience' (Harcourt to Roch ford, June 19, 1774). He is, however, better remembered by the witticism of North, that 'if you were to give him the whole of Great Britain and Ireland for an estate, he would ask the Isle of Man for a potato garden,' and Fox described him, with some exaggeration, as one of Ireland's 'most eminent jobbers, who after having obtained the Prime Serjeantcy, the Secretaryship of State, and twenty other great places, insisted upon the Lord Lieutenant's adding a major's half-pay to the rest of his emoluments.'—Grattan's *Life*, iii. p. 112. Barré also formed a very unfavourable estimate of him.—Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 113, 114.

[2] The *Wealth of Nations* is quoted, and some of its principles are adopted both in the *Commercial Restraints of Ireland*, published in 1779, and in a very remarkable memorandum on the state of Ireland sent to the Government by Hely Hutchinson in the June of the same year, which is in MS. in the Record Office. The *Wealth of Nations* was only

is said to have greatly raised the standard of debate, and to have been a master of polished sarcasm; but he was not a consistent and certainly not a disinterested politician. In general, however, the lawyers were exceedingly independent of the Government. The profession was at this time unusually flourishing in Ireland. The incomes made at the bar were, perhaps absolutely, certainly relatively to the cost of living, much greater than at present.[1] The most conspicuous barristers nearly always found their way into Parliament, and their presence was particularly valuable on account of the great prominence which questions of constitutional law speedily attained. With the exception of the Chief Justiceship of the King's Bench, which was so inadequately remunerated that it was scarcely an object to a great lawyer, the highest posts in the law were monopolised by Englishmen, and this fact was not without its influence upon the politics of the Irish Bar.[2] Henry

published in 1776. It is said first to have been mentioned in the British Parliament in 1783. See a curious note on the growing influence of Adam Smith in Buckle's *History of Civilisation*, i. 195.

[1] Malone, at a very early period of his career at the Bar, attained a professional income of 3,000 guineas a year (Grattan's *Life*, i. 62), and a generation later Fitzgibbon, in five and a half years, made 36,939*l.* (O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Irish Chancellors*, ii. 162). Harcourt in a letter written to Rochford in 1774 states that Hely Hutchinson had been making at the Bar between 4,000*l.* and 5,000*l.* a year (Harcourt *Papers*, ix. 199). I have been told that in the last thirty years very few men at the Irish Bar have made more than 3,000*l.* per annum. 'In all poor countries,' Shelburne said, 'the people are litigious, but in Ireland the several laws of settlement and the Popery laws have left the country scarcely a habit of anything else, and law is in all respects more expensive, more confused, and more prolific in Ireland than in England.'—Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 375.

[2] The salary of Chief Justice of the King's Bench in Ireland, Townshend said, was at least 500*l.* or 600*l.* a year lower than that of the Chief Justice of Common Pleas, 'for which reason, though it [the former] is usually given to a gentleman of this country, it seldom becomes an object for any person high in business to look up to, which, considering that the lawyers of

Flood, the son of a Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and a gentleman of large fortune and considerable political connection, was the most popular and powerful speaker of the small party known as patriots, and he was very ably seconded by Sir William Osborne, a country gentleman, whose excellent conduct towards his tenants has been commemorated by Arthur Young. Lucas had returned to Ireland after his long exile on a *noli prosequi*, and sat for Dublin; but he had no parliamentary ability or success. Gerard Hamilton, so well known in England as Single-Speech Hamilton, was Secretary to Lord Halifax and to Lord Northumberland, the first two Viceroys of George III., and his eloquence, which on one memorable occasion had electrified the English House of Commons, was more than once heard with extraordinary effect in the Irish Parliament.

The first seven years, however, of the reign of George III. were singularly uneventful in Ireland. The Undertakers still co-operated cordially with the Castle, and public affairs under Halifax, Northumberland, Hertford, and Bristol moved on very smoothly. During the Viceroyalty of Halifax the Spanish declaration of war placed England in enmity with the two branches of the House of Bourbon, and her resources seemed strained to the utmost limits of endurance. She had already one army in Germany and another in America. At least 20,000 English troops were protecting her dominions in the East and West Indies, in Africa, and in Gibraltar, and 5,000 men were stationed at Belleisle. Her fleet, besides the protection of her own coast and of her in-

eminence here are always in Parliament, may often become troublesome, if not prejudicial, to his Majesty's affairs. . . . I have great reason to believe this office is not at present worth more than 1,400*l.* per annum.' December 20, 1767. Townshend to Shelburne, Record Office. The salaries of the judges were, as we shall see, afterwards raised.

numerable merchant vessels, was scattered over the East and West Indies and in the Mediterranean, and she was at war with two great Roman Catholic powers, in whose armies thousands of Irishmen had served during the last eighty years. Had there been any serious disloyalty in the country such circumstances could hardly have failed to elicit it; but absolutely no sign of disloyalty was shown, and Ireland to the utmost of her small abilities supported England in the struggle. The Irish Parliament at once voted a war credit of 500,000*l.*, and augmented the establishment by five battalions. Gerard Hamilton described it as 'the most willing House of Commons that ever sat.'[1] Halifax, in a private letter, said that he had found 'the happiest and most perfect unanimity which has ever been known in this Parliament,'[2] and not the smallest disposition to embarrass the Government in this moment of difficulty and danger was shown in any quarter in Ireland. The Whiteboy movement disturbed Munster and part of Leinster, but it was entirely unconnected with political disaffection. The Irish Protestants had long contributed much more than their natural share to the British army, and the great Irish proprietors appear to have shown much activity in embodying their tenantry. The Earl of Drogheda, at an early stage of the war, had raised a regiment of light dragoons solely by his own exertions, chiefly at his own expense; and several other gentlemen were afterwards commissioned to raise regiments.[3]

[1] Hamilton's *Works*, p. 167.

[2] Halifax to Fgremont, April 17, 1762. On February 12, 1762, he wrote to Egremont:—'The vote of confidence for 200,000*l.* passed the House of Commons yesterday, without a negative or a single word of objection or observation, which, as there was no answering for the humours of individuals, especially as the demand came in addition to large supplies granted before, was more than I could expect.'—Record Office.

[3] Chatham *Correspondence*, ii. 60, 61.

The Catholics showed every disposition to co-operate with the Protestants. They had already come forward to attest their loyalty in 1759; and in February 1762 Lord Trimleston presented to Lord Halifax an address signed by all the leading Roman Catholics, asking permission to enrol their people for the service of the Crown. He urged, said Lord Halifax, that 'all impressions in favour of the Stuart family were worn out with the gentlemen of consequence and fortune in this country.' He appealed to the conduct of the Catholics in Ireland during the last war; challenged the Lord Lieutenant to produce a single instance from secret intelligence or from the captured correspondence of Murray, the young Pretender's Secretary, impeaching their fidelity; expressed his earnest wish that if they were not allowed to serve George III. as King of England, they might at least serve him as Elector of Hanover, or in any other way he should direct; and predicted that the formation of Catholic regiments would win back many Irishmen who, through the impossibility of finding any other career, had reluctantly enrolled themselves under the French flag.[1] The Government feared to change the law which prevented Roman Catholics from serving as officers in the British army; but they introduced and cordially supported a proposition for enrolling seven Irish Catholic regiments to serve in the allied army of Portugal.

Political difficulties and the approach of peace defeated this scheme, but no sign or evidence of Catholic disloyalty interfered with it. The Catholic bishops, immediately after the declaration of war by Spain, issued an address calling upon their co-religionists to join everywhere in the public day of prayer for the success of the King's arms.[2] The popularity of Pitt was hardly less in Ireland than

[1] Halifax to Egremont, February 1762. Record Office.
[2] Ibid.

in England. On his retirement from office the merchants and traders of Dublin presented to him an address expressing their enthusiastic admiration for his career. The citizens of Cork erected a marble statue of him in 1764 in their Exchange, and it was a complaint of the Government that in the first Address of the Commons on the Peace nothing was said in eulogy of its terms.[1]

There were, however, certain questions brought forward at this time in the Parliament which had a more purely Irish interest. The objects of the National party were simply to obtain for the Irish Protestants the laws which were regarded by Englishmen as the most essential guarantees of their liberty. The immovability of the judges and a Habeas Corpus Bill were frequently brought in; but the two measures on which their efforts were now mainly concentrated, were the restriction of pensions and the limitation of the duration of Parliament.

The grievance of the Pension List had been rapidly becoming insupportable; for, though none of the pensions granted under George III. were as scandalous as several which had been granted in former reigns, the aggregate amount was steadily and rapidly increasing. During the greater part of the reign of George II. it had been nearly stationary, and on the succession of the Duke of Devonshire to the Viceroyalty in April 1755, the pension list, exclusive of the French pensions and the military pensions, amounted to 38,003*l.*, but from this time it rapidly rose. On the accession of Bedford, in January 1757, it was 51,583*l.*; on the accession of Halifax, in April 1761, it was 64,127*l.* In the two years of this administration it rose to 70,752*l.*, and when Lord Townshend assumed the reins of power in

[1] *London Chronicle*, May 8–10, 1764. Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 348 352. See, too, the Government Correspondence in the Record Office.

August 1767, it had increased to 86,741*l.*[1] In 1753 the law imposing a tax of 4*s.* in the pound upon places and pensions held by absentees had been suffered to drop, for it was found that the clause enabling the Sovereign to grant exemptions rendered it wholly nugatory. The tax produced scarcely anything, and the exemption was always granted in the worst cases. The war had left Ireland with a debt of more than half a million, and her resources were so scanty that she staggered under the weight. With no foreign trade, with a people sunk in extreme poverty, with a permanent military establishment far larger in proportion to her population than that of England, at a time when her finances were greatly disordered, and when it might be supposed that her exertions might have entitled her to some consideration, Ireland found herself burdened with this vast increase of pensions, the greater part of them intended either to reward services which were not Irish or to increase the influence of the Crown. In 1757, when the pension list was comparatively moderate, the House of Commons passed resolutions denouncing the increase of pensions as alarming; and it compelled the Duke of Bedford, by a threat of withholding supplies, to transmit its resolutions to the King. In 1763, shortly after Lord Northumberland had come over, and at a time when the pension list had risen to 72,000*l.*, which was 42,000*l.* more than the whole Civil List, the subject was taken up with great ability by John Fitzgibbon, the father of the well-known Lord Clare. The House agreed that the pensions charged on the Civil List were an intolerable grievance, and it resolved itself into a committee to investigate the subject, but the Government succeeded in defeating the

[1] *Miscellaneous State Papers*, Irish State Paper Office (Report on Pensions). See, too, Grenville *Papers*, iv. 218.

project of an address to the King. In the course of the debates of this year Mr. Pery revealed to the House the remarkable fact that under a false name an Irish pension of 1,000*l.* a year had been granted to Count de Viri, the Sardinian ambassador, who took a prominent part in negotiating the Peace of Paris.[1] In 1765, as the pension list was still increasing, a new but abortive attempt was made to procure an address to the King.[2]

The grievance was particularly grave, because the greater part of these pensions appear to have been positively illegal. They were granted by the King upon the revenue at large; but it was admitted that the temporary portion of that revenue being voted for specific purposes could not be legally diverted to pensions. There remained then the hereditary revenue, and the King claimed, and, by long prescription, was allowed to treat it as private, alienable property. How little foundation there was for this claim was easily shown by an examination of the constituent parts of the hereditary revenue. The Excise had been granted in perpetuity 'for pay of the army and defraying other public charges in defence and preservation of this kingdom.' The Act granting tonnage and additional poundage, granted it for 'protecting the trade of this kingdom at sea, and augmenting the public revenue.' The hearth-money was described as 'public revenue for public charges and expenses.' The Act granting the revenue of all licences contained a clause restraining the Crown from charging it with pensions. The quit rents, and the Crown rents granted by the English Act, 11 & 12 William III., were subject to the same restriction, and the sole revenue in Ireland which was left by law at the absolute disposal

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[1] Caldwell's *Debates*, pp. 474, 475. Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 356-360.

[2] Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 373.

of the Crown, did not amount to 15,000*l.*, probably not to 7,000*l.* per annum.[1]

The National party was at this time unable to put any effectual stop to this great evil; but, in 1763, the Government of Lord Northumberland gave a distinct assurance that the King would not grant any more pensions for lives or years upon the establishment 'except on extraordinary occasions.'[2] The King appears to have had a real wish to restrict the pension list,[3] but under the system of government which was established it was not easy to do so, and in spite of all pledges it continued to increase.

The other subject which occupied a foremost place in popular politics was the limitation of the duration of Parliament. This question, with which Lucas had especially identified himself, and which was powerfully supported by the eloquence of Flood, was one of the very few that profoundly agitated the whole Protestant community of Ireland, and a large proportion of the members of the first Parliament of George III. were bound by the most stringent pledges to do their utmost to carry it. It was brought forward on the very first day on which the new Parliament sat, and heads of a Bill for septennial Parliaments were repeatedly carried through the Commons. There were, however, many different motives and influences at work, and a very large amount of insincerity was displayed. It was noticed with indignation in the country that, though the House of Commons in 1761 voted the heads of the Bill, it refused to present it in a body to the Lord Lieutenant

[1] Alexander McAulay's *Enquiry into the Legality of Pensions on the Irish Establishment* (London, 1763). Caldwell's *Debates*, pp. 206–220.

[2] Caldwell's *Debates*, pp. 494–496. The declaration was thought by the Government in England to be too strong and explicit.—Halifax to Northumberland, October 27, 1763. Record Office.

[3] See Grenville *Papers*, ii. 146, 147, 513.

and to request him to recommend it to his Majesty. The majority of the members in their hearts detested a measure which would increase their dependence on their constituents and expose them to the risk and expense of frequent elections. Some, who were less purely selfish, dreaded the effects of such elections in promoting idleness and disorder. The Undertakers feared that an increase of the popular element in Parliament would be fatal to their power; and the Government, both in England and Ireland, were afraid that it would eventually lead to a complete revision of the Constitution. On the other hand, it was impossible to mistake the earnestness of the constituencies, and the pressure they placed upon their representatives was such as had never before been known in Ireland, and had not often been known in England. In all parts of the country resolutions, addresses, and petitions in favour of septennial Parliaments were adopted at county meetings. Instructions of the most peremptory kind were sent up to the members. They were continually reminded of their election pledges, and every sign of languor was jealously watched.

The Undertakers, in spite of their boasted strength, could neither oppose nor divert the stream. Members of Parliament were not prepared to meet the storm of obloquy which assailed those who voted against the Bill, and they were extremely glad to transfer the unpopularity of rejecting it to the Irish Privy Council or to England.[1] The Irish Privy Council detested the Bill, but it passed it, trusting that the English Council would take upon itself the odium of the rejection. The

[1] Halifax to Egremont, December 8, December 11, December 23, 1761, February 12, 1762. —Record Office. 'From the best judgment I can form,' he wrote, 'the passing of this Bill into a law would be to the full as unacceptable to those who have promoted it in the House of Commons as to those who have opposed it.'

confidential letters of Halifax give a curious picture of the dread with which the measure was regarded by many of its ostensible supporters. At one time they united it with a property qualification for Members of Parliament copied from that which was in force in England, hoping that by this addition 'the Bill might be rendered less acceptable to the other branches of the Legislature.' At another, they artfully diffused a suspicion that a Septennial Act would be the precursor of a legislative union. Halifax himself, in his confidential despatches, was strongly opposed to short Parliaments, but in public he professed his neutrality. Members who were avowedly connected with the Castle supported the Bill; and the English Secretary of State, Lord Egremont, fully approved of the conduct of the Lord Lieutenant in not discrediting his Government by ineffectual opposition.[1]

Under Lord Northumberland the same double policy continued. He was in reality completely hostile to the Bill, but he said that even some of the servants of the Crown would vote for it.[2] The House of Commons, no longer content with passing the heads of the Bill, now addressed the King through the Lord Lieutenant, asking him to assent to it. Northumberland answered that 'he had received information of the most authentic nature that the Bill for limiting the duration of Parliament would not be returned this Session.' 'I shall, however,' he added, 'lay before his Majesty the sentiments of the House of Commons con-

[1] Egremont to Halifax, Dec. 15, 1761. Record Office.

[2] 'I have hitherto declined taking any part [about the Septennial Bill], as it was suffered to pass quickly in Parliament last session, and as I find many of the members, and even some of the King's servants, still think themselves bound by the same engagements which influenced their former conduct, and which they had entered into at the time of their election. I entertain, however, no doubt that it will be rejected in Council.'—Northumberland to Halifax, Feb. 8, 1764. Record Office.

tained in this address, and shall renew the representations which I have already made in the strongest and warmest manner in favour of such a law.' For the present, therefore, the English ministry took upon themselves the unpopularity of rejecting it.[1]

There were, however, no signs of diminution of the popular interest in the subject. Under Lord Northumberland the High Sheriff, and more than eight hundred of the Protestant merchants and traders of Dublin, signed a paper of instructions to their members, enjoining them to vote for no money Bill of longer duration than three months until a Septennial Bill had become law.[2] It was a serious thing to resist the strongest and most persistent wish of the electoral body in Ireland, and the attitude of Parliament on the question already showed that in spite of all defects in the Constitution, the popular voice had a real, if not a controlling, influence within its walls. It was not easy for any constitutional statesman to defend a system under which a single Parliament had sat for thirty-three years. Even the selfish interests were not all on the same side. Members of the House of Commons could not fail to see that a Septennial Act would add greatly to the importance of the assembly to which they belonged. Members of the House of Lords, who were the chief borough-owners in the country, knew that it would fully double the value of this form of property. Irish administrators knew that, whatever might be its ultimate effects, it would at least give an extraordinary popularity and strength to any government that carried

[1] Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 376. Lord Macartney says: 'A Lord Lieutenant may sometimes think it necessary seemingly to approve and acquiesce in what is desired, and the administration of England have often authorised him to do so, and taken the unpopularity of refusal upon themselves.' — Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 138.

[2] Plowden, i. 375, 376.

it. The English ministers did not desire to see an active Parliament in Ireland; but they had also no wish to alienate a thoroughly loyal people, and to take upon themselves for ever the exclusive odium of rejecting a popular Bill. Besides this, in the first years of the reign one of the leading objects of the Court party was to break down and dissolve all aristocratic connections which had acquired a controlling parliamentary influence, and it was a common opinion that the institution of septennial Parliaments would give a death-blow to the system of Undertakers in Ireland. Many of the Irish who voted for the Bill were haunted with a lurking dread that England would accept it, and the rejection in the first years of the reign appears only to have been decided upon after much uncertainty.

In spite of the difficulties arising from this question the administrations of the first Viceroys of George III. were very popular, though their tenure of office was exceedingly short. Lord Halifax appears to have been especially successful, and Parliament marked its sense of his merits by raising the annual salary of the Lord Lieutenant from 12,000*l.* to 16,000*l.* In October 1762, he was recalled to England to succeed Grenville as Secretary of State, and a year later the Earl of Northumberland, who replaced him, came over to Ireland to open Parliament.

In addition to the proceedings about pensions and septennial Parliaments, heads of a Habeas Corpus Bill and of a Bill for making the tenure of the judges secure during good behaviour, were carried at this time; but, as usual, they were suppressed in England. Heads of a Bill copied from the English Act of Anne for obliging those who accepted places or pensions to vacate their seats were also introduced; but, though the measure was described as 'a Bill of some expectation' and on 'a very popular question,' the Government succeeded in

defeating it in the House of Commons. At the end of 1764, Lord Shannon and Primate Stone, whose rivalry had so long distracted Irish politics, died within a few days of each other. Stone left no political successor; but the Shannon influence was continued by the young Earl, who found for a time a very powerful and able supporter in his connection, Ponsonby,[1] who was Speaker of the House of Commons and First Commissioner of the Revenue, and who, with the Chancellor Bowes, and afterwards with the Earl of Drogheda, was appointed Lord Justice. Northumberland was recalled in March 1765, and at this time the determination seems to have been taken in England to make the Lord Lieutenant for the future constantly resident in Ireland, in order by this means to break down the Government by Undertakers.[2] It was not, however, then easy to find politicians who would accept the post. Lord Weymouth, who was in very embarrassed circumstances, was first nominated; but though he received the usual grant of 3,000*l.* given to a new Lord Lieutenant for his equipage and voyage, he resigned before going over.[3] Lord Hertford, who followed, was succeeded in October 1766 by Lord Bristol, and on the appointment of the latter the King wrote with his own hand to Chatham that he expected 'his constant residence while he held his office.'[4] Bristol, however, threw up his office without coming to Ireland, though he also received from the Irish exchequer 3,000*l.* for his voyage and equipage;[5] and in October

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[1] Ponsonby had married the daughter of the old Lord Shannon.

[2] Grenville *Papers*, iii. 124.

[3] Ibid. iii. 163, 191. He was bitterly attacked for this by Junius. The payment will be found duly recorded in the Commons' *Journals*, xiv. 321.

[4] Chatham *Correspondence*, iii. 51, 55–57. See, too, Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 144.

[5] Commons' *Journals*, xiv. 324.

1767, Lord Townshend came over as Viceroy to establish the new system of government.

He was brother of Charles Townshend, and his appointment was nearly the last act of that brilliant but erratic statesman. His antecedents were wholly military. He had served at Dettingen, Fontenoy, Culloden, and Laffeldt, and at the siege of Quebec had become commander-in-chief upon the death of Wolfe and the disablement of Monckton; but his conduct on this last occasion had not raised his fame, for he was accused of having persistently thwarted Wolfe during his lifetime, and of having endeavoured after his death to rob him, by a very invidious silence, of the honour of the capture of Quebec.[1] Townshend, however, was by no means an unamiable man. He was brave, honest, and frank; popular in his manners, witty, convivial, and with a great turn for caricature, but violent and capricious in his temper, and exceedingly destitute of tact, dignity, and decorum. He certainly drank hard, and he was accused of low vices, and a great love of low companions.[2] His military knowledge was of much use in some parts of his Irish government, but he was totally inexperienced in civil administration. In some letters of Sir J. Caldwell, written about three months after the arrival of Townshend, we have a graphic and not unpleasing picture of the Viceregal habits. Townshend, he said, was living very hospitably, drinking somewhat less than at the beginning, and laying himself out to be agreeable and entertaining. He was on terms of familiarity with everybody, showed great powers of conversation over the bottle, and was generally thought 'a good-humoured,

[1] Grenville *Papers*, i. 311. He was severely censured on this ground in a *Letter to an Honourable Brigadier-General*, which has been sometimes attributed to Junius.

[2] Walpole's *George III.* iii. 109–111; iv. 348, 349. Grenville *Papers*, iv. 232, 233. *Barataria*, passim.

cheerful man, meaning no harm,' disinterested, benevolent, and sincere. He walked all over the town in the mornings plainly dressed, with a stick in his hand, saying that he did not choose to be kept like a tame lion, and only allowed to take the air under the protection of guards. On one occasion he took up in his arms a blind beggar who had fallen on the ice, and had him carried into a neighbouring house and his wounds carefully dressed. He refused to sit in the customary arm-chair, saying that a chair of state was by no means an 'easy chair' to him. He constantly talked of his want of power to those who asked favours, and he showed himself seriously offended when Bishop Hervey thanked him for his promotion to the see of Derry as though it were rather due to the Lord Lieutenant than to the King.[1]

It seemed at first as if Townshend could not fail to be popular in Ireland. His constant residence, however displeasing it might be to a few great families, was likely to be generally acceptable, and he was authorised, not only to reiterate the declaration of Northumberland that, except on very important occasions, no new pensions should be granted, but also to inform the chief persons in Ireland that the English Government had resolved to grant the capital points of the limitation of the duration of Parliament, and of the security of the judges' tenure of office, and to consider with a favourable disposition the demand for a Habeas Corpus Act, and for the creation of a national militia. His secretary, Sir George Macartney, was an Irishman, and the Irish Chancellor Bowes having died in July 1767, it was thought not impossible that an Irishman might be appointed to succeed him.

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[1] Lansdowne *Papers*, British Museum. Add. MS. 24,137.

No Irish administration had opened under more favourable circumstances. Although the residence of the Lord Lieutenant was ultimately intended to subvert the power of the Undertakers, Townshend at first showed no hostility to them, and was quite prepared to co-operate with them. He was instructed to employ all his power and all his popularity in carrying a measure on which the personal wishes of the King were intensely set. This measure was the augmentation of the Irish army to a little more than 15,000 men.

In his very first speech from the throne, however, he committed the grave indiscretion of announcing formally and publicly that he had it in charge from the King that provision should be made for securing the judges in their seats during good behaviour, though, in fact, the ministers at home had only authorised him privately and in general terms to offer this, as well as other concessions, to the chief people whose support he desired.[1] The measure was a favourite one of the National party in Ireland, and on the first day of the Session heads of a Bill to carry it into effect were unexpectedly brought forward by an independent mem-

[1] Shelburne wrote (Oct. 29, 1767), severely rebuking him for this. He says the public announcement 'was expressly contrary to the opinion of the Lords who met at the Lord President's the evening before your departure; when at the same time that they approved the measure, upon full consideration of your Excellency's proposal to mention it in your speech, they did for very material reasons recommend it to your Excellency rather to make use of general words, leaving it to you to take occasion in private conversation to acquaint such persons as your Excellency should judge it for H.M.'s service to talk confidentially with, of the determination of the King's servants to support in Council the Septennial Bill, and the judges' for life, and to hear with a favourable disposition whatever should be offered towards the forming of a Militia, and Habeas Corpus Act.'—Record Office. It is remarkable how accurately Walpole relates this episode, which could only have been known to a very few confidential servants of the Crown.—*Memoirs of George III.* iii. 109.

ber and carried without difficulty. It soon, however, appeared that the views of the English ministers and those of the popular party in Ireland were irreconcilable. The Irish wished a law exactly like that which had been enacted in England after the Revolution, and, as in England a judge could be removed by an address of both Houses of Parliament, they proposed to give a similar power in Ireland to their own Parliament. The English ministers were determined that the Irish Privy Council should be recognised as an essential part of the Irish Constitution, and that the dependence of Ireland on the English Parliament should be emphatically asserted. Shelburne wrote to Townshend that the Irish judges must be removable only upon a representation of the two Irish Houses of Parliament and the Irish Privy Council conjointly, or upon an address of the two Houses of the British Parliament. Townshend at once summoned the confidential servants of the Crown, and directed them to have clauses to this effect inserted in committee, but they all answered that such clauses would be rejected with indignation, and they entreated him to keep it a secret that they had ever been thought of. The Bill was therefore suffered to proceed to England in a form corresponding with the English Act, but it was returned with clauses making it necessary for addresses of the two Irish Houses for the removal of a judge to be certified by the Privy Council, and making the Irish judges removable by the British Parliament. The Irish House of Commons at once rejected the Bill, and the promise in the speech from the throne was branded with some reason as not much better than a deception.[1]

The appointment of a new Chancellor was another

[1] Grenville *Papers*, iv. 296, 297. Townshend to Shelburne, Nov. 29, Dec. 28, 1767. Record Office.

subject of discontent. As political life increased, the old system of placing Englishmen in all the foremost legal, as well as ecclesiastical and political positions,[1] was borne with great impatience, and in addition to the Chief Justiceship of King's Bench, the post of Chief Baron had very lately been opened to Irishmen. Flood had recently animadverted in severe terms upon the character of the English judges in Ireland, and the subject had a special importance, as the chiefs of the law courts were official members of the Privy Council. Townshend was extremely anxious, when establishing the new system of government, to acquire the popularity and the strength that were sure to follow the appointment of an Irishman as Chancellor, and before going over to Ireland he had urged the expediency of this course strenuously and even passionately in a Cabinet Council. Several of the ministers agreed with him, but Lord Camden and the other legal members of the English Government resisted, and Lord Northington, who was consulted on the subject, threw his influence into the same scale.[2] It was found, however, that none of the leading English lawyers would accept the post without an additional pension, which was withheld in consequence of the opposition of Conway,[3] and accordingly during several months, and at a time when the Irish Parliament was sitting, the Court of Chancery was shut because the

[1] 'The heads of the Church, the State, the Army, and the Law in Ireland have for a course of years been of another country. Of the twenty-two right reverend prelates the natives only furnish seven, . . . of the seven chief judicial offices, two only are occupied by Irishmen. Of the fourteen great officers of the staff, five only are of that country, and besides all this, several of the principal employments are granted in reversion out of the kingdom.' — *Considerations on the Dependencies of Great Britain* [1769, by Sir Hercules Langrishe], p. 46.

[2] Grenville *Papers*, iv. 170–175. Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, vi. 386–389.

[3] Walpole's *George III.* iii. 109.

ministers would not choose an Irishman and could not find an Englishman for the post. At length, on November 17, 1767, Sir Lucius O'Brien moved an address to the King on the subject, and although, by the assistance of Lord Shannon, the ministers succeeded in defeating the motion, it had, at least, the effect of obliging them to send over in the following month a second-rate lawyer named Hewitt, as Chancellor. Townshend made no secret of the manner in which his judgment was overruled, and he is said to have drawn his own picture with his hands tied behind him and his mouth open.[1]

The irritation excited by these things was increased by the delay in transmitting the popular Bills. A belief spread widely that Townshend was only playing with the Septennial Bill as his predecessors had done, and that the assurances he had given were only intended to induce Parliament to sanction the augmentation of the army. He had soon to report to the Government at home the alarming accounts which his Attorney-General had given him of 'the very general discontent which had been long gaining ground amongst all ranks of people,' how it increased day by day as members flocked in from the country, till it became almost impossible to resist it; how a Bill of Supply limited to three months was openly spoken of by the country gentlemen as 'the only certain method they had of obtaining those popular Bills which had been so often demanded and so constantly refused.'[2] The House of Commons, not content with passing the heads of the Septennial Bill, presented it in a body to the Lord Lieutenant, and it appeared evident that until some more definite concession was made, there was little

[1] Grenville *Papers*, iv. 232, 233. Townshend to Shelburne, Oct. 27, Nov. 13, Nov. 15, Nov. 17. Shelburne to Townshend, Nov. 24, 1767. Record Office.

[2] Townshend to Shelburne, Nov. 15, 1767 (secret and confidential).

chance of carrying the favourite augmentation scheme of the Government.

This latter proposal was part of a policy with which we have already been much concerned in the English portion of this history. We have seen that it was one of the strongest convictions of the King and of a few of the leading English statesmen, that the British army, after the Peace of Paris, was wholly inadequate to the defence of the extended Empire, and that it was therefore imperatively necessary to augment it. In England the antipathy to a standing army was so great; parties were so divided, and the King was so anxious to win the popularity necessary to break down aristocratic connections, that no attempt was made to increase the peace establishment. In America the ministers had persistently endeavoured to induce or compel the colonists to support an army for their own defence, but they had signally failed, and instead of creating a new army they had created a new and very formidable mass of discontent. It was hoped that they might be more successful in Ireland, where the influence of the Crown upon the Legislature was much greater, where the feeling against a standing army was much less strong, and where circumstances had given the Protestant population much of the character of a military caste.

I have already contended that they were right in considering that an augmentation of the forces was necessary for the security of the Empire; but it is not surprising that Irish politicians should have disputed the propriety of throwing it on Ireland. The peace establishment of Great Britain was usually about 17,000 men. The peace establishment of Ireland, since the reign of William, had been 12,000 men, recruited solely from the Protestants. Considering the enormous difference between the two countries, both in population and in

resources, it was maintained that Ireland already bore more than her proportionate share, even allowing for the fact that she contributed nothing to the support of the British navy. It was, no doubt, perfectly true that in Ireland a considerable army was required for the protection of the country, that the revenue could often not be collected without a military escort, that Whiteboys in the South and Oakboys in the North could only be suppressed by a disciplined force; but it was not alleged that the 12,000 men who were already supported by Irish taxation were insufficient for these purposes, and, as we have already seen, there had scarcely been an occasion of national danger since the Revolution, in which a great part of the Irish army had not been sent out of the country.[1] If anything more was needed, the National party were not only ready but eager to establish a militia, and Flood had already unsuccessfully brought forward a Bill for creating one.[2] The existing army was not unpopular, and no one desired to diminish it; but there was much in its constitution that was anomalous and a grievance. Created by an English Act of Parliament, paid from the hereditary revenue, governed without an Irish Mutiny Act, it was constructed on a scale of lavish and increasing extravagance. The number of regiments, and consequently of officers, and especially of higher officers, was much greater in proportion to the number of men than in England. It was stated in Parliament, in 1763, that the staff of general officers in Ireland cost 22,000*l.* a year, while that in England cost only 11,000*l.*; that the whole expense of general officers paid by Ireland had risen in two years from 32,000*l.* to 45,000*l.*; that most of the generals lived habitually in England, and that several branches

[1] See vol. i. 142, 143.
[2] Chatham *Correspondence*, iii. 3.

of the Irish military expenditure had trebled or quadrupled in two years.[1]

It was added that the obvious reason for increasing the army was the extension of the Empire in America, and that there was a peculiar refinement of injustice in throwing upon Ireland the defence of the colonies when she was excluded by express enactment from all commercial intercourse with them. Besides this, the National party already recognised the cause of the colonists in their struggle with England as substantially identical with their own, and they urgently deprecated the possibility of an Irish army being employed in coercing America.

Nor were the finances of the country in a condition to justify a permanent addition to the expenditure. It appeared by the accounts laid before Parliament that in the year ending at Lady Day 1767, the hereditary revenue had been about 623,000*l.*, and the additional duties about 225,000*l.*, and in both departments there had been a considerable falling off since the preceding year.[2] The Peace had been followed by a period of extraordinary prosperity in the victualling trade, but yet the debt, according to the calculation of Lord Townshend, instead of diminishing had increased during the four years of peace between Lady Day 1763 and Lady Day 1767, from 521,161*l.* to 581,964*l.*, and the revenue was still largely below the expenditure. If this was the case with the existing establishment, and at a time of

[1] Caldwell's *Debates*, pp. 209, 210, 302, 583, 584. It is worthy of notice that George Grenville, the proposer of the American army, had contemplated an augmentation of the Irish army, 'so that Ireland might bear a part of the public burden of the country, and have a sufficient number for her own defence.' He was led to the scheme by finding that the troops in the country had been at one time reduced to 5,000 men, but he ultimately abandoned it.—Cavendish *Debates*, i. 555.

[2] Commons' *Journals*, xiv. 325.

unusual prosperity, was it wise to add more than 3,000 men to the permanent military establishment, and to bring it within 2,000 men of the peace establishment of Great Britain? 'Those,' wrote Lord Townshend, 'who are best acquainted with the state of the revenue are of opinion that the country is not able to bear such an additional expense. Upon calling for the public accounts, and examining more minutely into this matter, I am sorry to find these opinions too well grounded.'[1] Considering the increase of the National Debt the Council were unanimously of opinion that 2,000 men was the largest augmentation the country could bear.[2]

The English ministers treated these fears with much contempt, pointing to the profusion of private and often corrupt grants that were voted; but it was natural that this argument should have more weight in London than in Dublin. Admitting, it was said, that private or political motives often determined the particular enterprise which Parliament assisted, those private grants were at least a portion of the Irish revenue, which was expended in Ireland and for Irish purposes. Considering that nearly all the most lucrative posts in Ireland were held by Englishmen, that a great part of the overgrown and rapidly increasing pension list was in favour of men who never visited the country, that a great portion of the military expenditure went in paying generals and even troops who were not in Ireland, that the commerce of Ireland was cramped and confined with the view of making all advantages centre upon England, and that an enormous proportion of Irish rents were habitually sent to England, there was surely a certain effrontery in the ministerial complaint that the Irish revenue was 'loaded with private grants' for the benefit

[1] Nov. 5, 1767. Townshend to Shelburne. [2] Ibid.

of Irishmen and Irish enterprises. Most of these grants were for purposes of incontestable utility. Many thousands of pounds had been devoted to making the buildings of Trinity College worthy of a great university. Many thousands had been employed in giving Ireland the early benefit of the new system of internal navigation. Was it indeed so intolerable that considerable sums should be employed in opening new roads, in giving bounties to fisheries or agriculture, in subsidising the Dublin Society or the Charter Schools, in erecting county infirmaries, or chapels of ease? If, in the grants to public works, favours were most readily granted to those who possessed parliamentary influence, some public benefit was at least combined with this political corruption. It was by no means clear that the public assistance granted to private enterprises was excessive in a country where industry and industrial enterprise were very low, and it was quite certain that the condition of the nation would not be improved by diverting this, like so many other parts of the national revenue, from Irish purposes.

It will probably be admitted that these arguments were not without great force, and the task of Lord Townshend in carrying the augmentation was a very difficult one. If the measure had stood alone, it would have incontestably failed, but the Lord Lieutenant was authorised to purchase it by several concessions of the highest value.

He was, in the first place, to assure the principal persons in Parliament of the intention of the King's servants to grant the capital wish of the Irish constituencies, the limitation of the Irish Parliament to seven or, at least, to eight years, and he was directed to use to the utmost the popularity acquired by this communication in order to obtain the augmentation, remembering that these two measures must always be considered to-

gether.[1] He was, in the next place, to have a clause inserted in the Augmentation Bill securing that if the Irish establishment was raised to a little more than 15,000 men, 12,000 should always remain in Ireland, unless the Irish Parliament chose to authorise their expatriation, except in case of sudden and extraordinary emergency. The Irish gentry, who had more than once been left almost wholly unprotected in time of danger, attached so great an importance to this new guarantee that with many of them it was quite sufficient to outweigh all the disadvantages of the augmentation. Something was also done to lighten the financial burden. The King again authorised his representative to declare that, except on very urgent occasions, he would grant no additional pensions for life or for years or in reversion. The Government consented, after much hesitation and delay, to accept a re-enactment of the old law imposing a tax of 4*s.* in the pound on absentee place-holders and pensioners, with the omission of the important clause authorising the Sovereign to exempt those whom he pleased from its operation. It was also provided in the augmentation scheme that the Irish battalions should be assimilated to those of England, by which means the proportionate expenditure would be considerably reduced.

These offers were very considerable, and the return, in February 1768, of the Bill for shortening the duration of Parliament, excited the warmest gratitude in Ireland. The Bill was, it is true, changed from a septennial to an octennial one, and it has been repeatedly stated, both by English and Irish writers,[2] that this alteration was a manœuvre intended to induce Parliament to reject it. This charge is, however, completely

[1] Shelburne to Townshend, Nov. 5, 1767.

[2] See the history of this measure in Almon's *Biographical Anecdotes*, i. 101-109. Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 388.

unfounded, and the conduct of the English Government in the whole matter was perfectly honest. As early as November 5, 1767, Shelburne had announced to Townshend that if the duration of Parliament was shortened the Act should be octennial rather than septennial, in order to suit the special circumstances of Ireland, where Parliament only sat every second year, and also to prevent the inconvenience which would arise if general elections in England and Ireland were simultaneous,[1] and before making the alteration, he had obtained an assurance from Townshend that it would be accepted.[2] The alteration was indeed manifestly expedient as long as Parliament only held biennial sessions, and it did nothing to diminish the popularity of the concession. The Parliament house was surrounded by many thousands of men who compelled the members as they entered to promise that they would vote for the Bill, and all over the country the excitement was such that it would have been madness to have resisted. The Bill was thus passed which laid the foundation of parliamentary influence and independence in Ireland, and the Lord Lieutenant, who had recommended it, was for a time the object of unbounded enthusiasm. His carriage was drawn by the crowd from the Castle to Parliament, when he went to pronounce the royal assent. Parliament passed a warm vote of thanks to the King for giving his

[1] Shelburne to Townshend, Nov. 5, 1767.

[2] 'The Committee upon this Bill [for limiting the duration of Parliament] would by no means come into what, by your Lordship's directions, I suggested to several of the principal persons here, which was to fill up the blank with the word eight, though I believe many members do in truth wish even for a longer term. . . . At the same time I have great reason to believe that should the Privy Council in England think it expedient to make this Bill octennial, though it would in some degree take away from the popularity of the measure, it would by no means endanger its being rejected here.' —Townshend to Shelburne, Nov. 29, 1767.

assent to the Bill, and hostile motions which were pending for inquiring into the excessive expenditure in pensions and in the army were speedily dropped.[1]

The Augmentation Bill, however, was not yet carried, and it was this question which brought the Government into direct collision with the Undertakers, who had hitherto supported them. Lord Shannon, Ponsonby, and Hely Hutchinson were now in close union, and in December 1767 they were in communication with Lord Townshend on the subject. They consented readily, on condition of receiving certain personal favours, which they stated with cynical frankness,[2] to carry the ordinary business of the Government through Parliament; but they pronounced the Augmentation scheme to be so expensive and unpopular, that it could not be safely proposed without the co-operation of the Duke of Leinster and Lord Tyrone, and the assent of some of the popular speakers such as Flood and Sir W. Osborne. None of these persons would give their consent, and, on the other hand, Shelburne refused with much dignity to purchase the limited support which was offered, or to consent to the request of Lord Townshend that 'His Majesty would recede from that strict rule which he had laid down with regard to pensions for life or years, and

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[1] Plowden, Gordon. Townshend to Shelburne, Feb. 16, May 3, 1768.

[2] They demanded a share in the disposal of his Majesty's favours in Ireland 'proportioned to the number of their friends and their weight in the country.' Lord Shannon wished to be one of the three Lords Justices; Mr. Ponsonby expected the office of Examinator of Customs, now in possession of his eldest son, to be given to his two sons for their joint lives; the Prime Serjeant asked that life offices of not less than 500*l.* a year, should be given jointly to his two sons, that his wife should be created a viscountess, and that 4,000*l.*, which he said was a debt due to him by the Government and acknowledged by Lord Hertford, should be speedily paid.—Townshend to Shelburne (secret), Dec. 12, 1767.

reversions,' in order to win parliamentary support.[1] The result was that the old party of the Undertakers went into violent opposition, and the Government had to look elsewhere for support. The letters of Lord Townshend show that many independent members favoured the scheme,[2] and that he did not believe it to be unpopular in the country, though it was the general wish that it should be postponed till after the dissolution which followed the Octennial Act. 'I am every day more and more convinced,' he wrote in February 1768,[3] 'that the independent gentlemen who have some considerable following are resolved to go on with great moderation.' He speaks in grateful terms of the assistance they gave him; he proposed to apply formally 'for help to those who are generally in opposition, and are called the independent gentlemen,' and he noticed that the county of Dublin alone had instructed its members against the Bill, and that the Octennial Bill, and the security that was given for the constant presence of 12,000 men in the country, had given great satisfaction. On the other hand, the most popular orators in the assembly denounced the proposal as intended to coerce America, and as certain to ruin the finances of Ireland. The largest borough proprietors were in opposition, and

[1] Townshend to Shelburne, Dec. 12, 1767. Fitzmaurice's *Life of Shelburne*, ii. 103. Lord E. Fitzmaurice has printed several of the more important letters relating to this episode.

[2] 'As to individuals, independent of those whom Government have a hold upon, I have met with a very general approbation of this measure, one thing being always taken for granted, that security is to be given that 12,000 men shall always remain in Ireland, except when the immediate defence of Great Britain, either from an invasion or a rebellion, shall require their being removed.'—Townshend to Shelburne, Dec. 12, 1767.

[3] Feb. 4, 1768. On the 16th he speaks again of the 'great moderation of the country gentlemen,' and adds 'I have now the satisfaction to acquaint your Lordship that I have met with their most hearty assistance.'

many of the supporters of the Bill feared to vote so large an increase of expense on the eve of an election. 'It is the general wish of every person here,' he wrote, 'from the highest to the lowest, that the Parliament should be instantly dissolved, and the augmentation be proposed in the next . . . when men would be at liberty to act freely.'[1]

Shelburne, however, would grant no delay. An English Act of William had authorised the Crown to keep 12,000 soldiers, but not more, on the Irish establishment. Another English Act was now carried removing the restriction, and at the same time giving a security that 12,000 men should be permanently kept in Ireland, and a King's message was laid before the Irish Parliament stating that an augmentation raising the Irish army to 15,255 men had, in the opinion of his Majesty, become necessary. The public service, the message said, required 'that some part of the troops kept on the establishment of Ireland should be employed towards the necessary defence of his Majesty's garrisons and plantations abroad,' and in addition to these it was expedient that 12,000 men should be kept in Ireland, 'as far as is consistent with such a defence as the safety of both kingdoms in case of any sudden or extraordinary emergency may require.'[2] The House at once resolved itself into a committee; an address was moved acceding to the request, but 'notwithstanding every effort that was made and every support given by the country gentlemen, who, to secure the success of this measure, had advised to have it postponed to another session, the address was rejected by 108 to 104.' Lord Shannon,

[1] April 6, 1768. Townshend to Shelburne.

[2] Commons' *Journals*, xiv. 526, 527. The English Statute, 18 George III. ch. 13, likewise gives the necessity of employing some Irish troops in 'garrisons and plantations abroad' as a main reason for the augmentation.

the Speaker, the Prime Serjeant, and the Attorney-General, both in public and private, did their utmost to obstruct the Bill, but the result, though a defeat, was not regarded as discouraging. 'Amongst those who, during this remarkable session, have supported the King's Government with constancy and firmness, without so much as hinting at any consideration,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'there are many men of the first abilities, of the greatest property and integrity, who, should changes be thought necessary, I could recommend to his Majesty as servants that could carry on public business with safety and credit.'[1]

Shortly after this defeat of the Government, the news arrived that the English Privy Council declined to return the Habeas Corpus Bill, alleging the danger arising from the immense preponderance of Catholics in Ireland, and from the disturbed condition of a great part of Munster.[2]

Parliament was dissolved on May 28, 1768, and Townshend at once threw himself with characteristic vehemence into the task of breaking down the power of the Undertakers. 'The constant plan of these men of power,' he wrote, speaking of Shannon and Ponsonby, 'is to possess the government of this country, and to lower the authority of English government, which must in the end destroy that dependence which this kingdom has upon Great Britain.' He complained that they had almost reduced the Lord Lieutenant to 'a mere pageant of State,' and he warned the Government that the crisis had arrived, and that upon the determination now shown in resisting the Undertakers depended the future strength of English government in Ireland. A complete change of persons, though for a time delayed,

[1] Townshend to Shelburne, May 3, 1768.

[2] Shelburne to Townshend. April 23, 1768.

must eventually be effected; the aristocratic party must be thoroughly broken; in order to restore vigour to the government of the Crown, Ireland must remain under the constant attention of a resident Viceroy; every place, office, and honour must depend exclusively upon his favour, and in this manner an overwhelming political influence must be gradually concentrated in the Crown. Immediately after the Session of 1768, as an earnest of the favours to be expected by those who supported the Viceroy, four peers were raised a step in the peerage, four new peers, three baronets, and four Privy Councillors were made, and Townshend urged the propriety of creating an Irish Order like that of the Thistle or the Bath in order to reward those members of the nobility who were foremost in supporting the Government.[1]

The system was not yet fully matured, but it was at least fully conceived. The overwhelming preponderance of nomination boroughs in the Irish Parliament had given three or four men an extraordinary power, which the Viceroy was resolved to destroy, and for this purpose he designed to attach as many as possible of the minor borough-owners to himself by a lavish creation of peerages. Apart from the pension list, direct pecuniary bribes to members of Parliament did not exist. There was no fund from which they could be drawn, but places were extravagantly multiplied, and pensions, in spite of royal promises, were soon granted anew for the purpose of securing parliamentary support. At the same time, Townshend had no wish to rely solely on corrupt means, and he hoped to secure the assistance of the independent country gentlemen, and even of the leaders of the most advanced party. 'The Octennial Bill,' he wrote, 'gave the first blow to the dominion of aristocracy in this

[1] Townshend to Shelburne, May 31, 1768; to Weymouth, Aug. 17, Oct. 22, Nov. 21, 1769; Shelburne to Townshend, May 19, 1768; Weymouth to Townshend, June 9, 1769.

kingdom, and it rests with Government to second the good effects of it,' and he strongly urged the ministers to call Flood and Sir W. Osborne to office.[1]

It is not easy to realise the conditions of Irish parliamentary politics at this time, for all analogies drawn from the Irish contingent in the Imperial Parliament are wholly misleading. In the Parliament of the early years of George III. all the members were Protestants and elected by Protestants, and the most liberal regarded the propriety of Protestant ascendency as an axiom.[2] The party which now calls itself distinctively national was absolutely unrepresented. The Catholic priesthood, who are now perhaps the strongest element in Irish political life, had not a vestige of power; and although corrupt and factious motives may be often detected, the great tribe of knaves and fanatics who now win political power by stimulating disloyalty, or class hatred, or agrarian crime, had as yet no existence. There was a great and justifiable discontent at the constitutional and commercial restrictions; but there was

[1] Townshend to Weymouth, Aug. 17, Sept. 13, 1769.

[2] As late as 1792 Henry Grattan, who of all men in the Irish Parliament was the warmest and most unflinching advocate of the Catholics, received an address from some citizens of Dublin, expressing alarm at changes favourable to the Catholics which were spoken of, and urging him to oppose 'any alteration that may tend to shake the security of property in this kingdom, or subvert the Protestant ascendency in our happy constitution.' Grattan in his answer said: 'The Roman Catholics whom I love and the Protestants whom I prefer are both, I hope, too enlightened to renew religious animosity. I do not hesitate to say I love the Roman Catholic. I am a friend to his liberty, but it is only in as much as his liberty is entirely consistent with your ascendency, and an addition to the strength and freedom of the Protestant community. These being my principles and the Protestant interest my first object, you may judge that I shall never assent to any measure tending to shake the security of property in this kingdom or to subvert the Protestant ascendency.'—Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 289.

at bottom no real disloyalty, and in times of danger Parliament was ever ready to bear its full share, and something more than its full share, in the defence of the Empire. In the counties the ascendency of the landlords was undisputed. In the large towns there was an active political life and a strong democratic spirit aspiring towards constitutional privileges, but Irish democracy had as yet no leaning towards the Catholics. Some of the numerous small boroughs were held by men who had purchased their seats. Some were attached to the properties of country gentlemen of moderate fortune. Some were under the direct influence of the Government, or were connected with ecclesiastical preferments and filled by the nominees of bishops. Very many belonged to a few rich members of the House of Lords, who had made it an object to accumulate political power. It appears to have been considered a point of honour that a borough member should not on an important question vote against the policy of his patron.

The body which was thus formed was not divided like a modern Parliament into clearly marked party divisions. Lord Shannon, the Duke of Leinster, Lord Ely, Lord Tyrone, Lord Drogheda, and Mr. Ponsonby had each of them a considerable group of personal adherents, but the lines of Whig and Tory, Government and Opposition, were not drawn with any clearness or constancy. Usually the Government in ordinary business carried with it an enormous majority, but there were questions on which the strongest Government nearly always became suddenly powerless. Money Bills that took their rise or were materially modified in England were almost always rejected, and on several constitutional questions Parliament had a very decided will of its own. It was a common thing for paid servants of the Crown, while in general supporting the

Government, to go on particular questions into violent opposition, and for men, who had on particular questions been the most active opponents of Government, to pass suddenly into its ranks; and there was a rapid fluctuation of politicians between Government and Opposition which is very perplexing to a modern reader. Many corrupt motives no doubt mingled with these changes, but the root of the matter lay in the fact that settled parties had not yet been formed, that all questions were considered mainly in isolation, and that there was little or nothing of that systematic and disciplined concurrence of opinion based upon party lines which prevails in a modern Parliament.

The absence of parties was partly due to the rudimentary character of Irish parliamentary life and to the nature of the constituencies, which gave a predominating influence to a few personal interests, and traces of a somewhat similar state of things may be detected in English parliamentary life between the Revolution and the close of the reign of George II. There was, however, another cause which was peculiar to Ireland, and the importance of which has not, I think, been sufficiently noticed. The position which the Privy Council held in the Irish constitution enabled the Government to withdraw from serious parliamentary conflict the capital questions around which party divisions would have been naturally formed. Short Parliaments, a secure tenure for judges' seats, and a Habeas Corpus Act were during many years among the chief objects of the popular party; but year after year they were carried without opposition and without division through Parliament, and Government ostensibly acquiesced in them, reserving it for the Privy Council in Ireland or England to reject them. One of the effects of this system was to check the normal growth of Parliament and confuse the lines of party division. The Privy

Council, on the other hand, became a kind of additional Parliament[1] in which, though the Lord Lieutenant had a preponderating power, there were several conflicting and independent influences, and which on many important questions became the chief centre of authority and even of discussion.

The unorganised condition of Parliament was very favourable to the designs of the Government, and the elections showed a general sentiment of gratitude for the Octennial Act, and no strong or general antipathy in the country to the proposed Augmentation scheme. During the months which preceded the meeting of Parliament Townshend was busy in negotiating with leading politicians on the subject, and he reported that, with a few modifications, the measure might be easily carried. The country gentlemen did not think the guarantee for the continual presence of 12,000 men in Ireland sufficiently explicit, and it was accordingly agreed that those troops should remain in Ireland 'except in case of invasion or rebellion in Great Britain.' The diminution of the extravagance of the Irish military establishments, by reducing the proportion of officers to men and assimilating the Irish battalions to those of England, was of great use, and it was provided that the scandalous number of the absentee general officers composing the military staff of Ireland, who drew their pay from Irish resources though living in England, should be gradually diminished. Townshend also asked that Ireland, in spite of the commercial restrictions, should be allowed the small boon of clothing her own troops when they were out of the kingdom, and he added significantly, 'Whenever Great Britain can allow Ireland some branch of the British manufactures which are

[1] As that very experienced official, William Knox, truly said, the Privy Council was in reality the second branch of the Legislature, in Ireland.—*Extra Official Papers*, Appendix, No. 1.

declining or given over to our enemies, particularly if Ireland might be allowed a free exportation of woollen goods under a certain price . . . . it would certainly be a great blessing to his Majesty's wretched subjects in this kingdom.' He was extremely anxious to obtain the support of Hely Hutchinson for the measure, and he succeeded in doing so on condition that the Irish army should be established by the authority of an Irish Act of Parliament, and not, as hitherto, by an English one. Something was said about the desire of some members to obtain an annual Irish Mutiny Act; but this was not seriously pressed, and as Lord Weymouth, who had succeeded Shelburne as Secretary of State, was prepared to make the chief concessions that were demanded, Townshend met the new Parliament on October 17, 1769, with little alarm.[1]

Lord Shannon, Ponsonby, and their followers were not yet removed from their different offices; and Ponsonby, in addition to his great and lucrative position of Speaker,[2] was still Chief Commissioner of the Revenue, which gave him an amount of patronage that, in the opinion of Townshend, should be granted to no one but the Viceroy. The removal of these men was, however, already determined, and their relations to the Castle were very hostile. There was much bargaining with borough-owners, and we learn incidentally that Lord Drogheda and Lord Tyrone were anxious to become Marquises.[3] An instruction to the Committee of Supply to take into consideration what forces were necessary to be maintained in the country for its

[1] Townshend to Weymouth, Aug. 17, Oct. 22, 1769.

[2] In 1759 500*l.* was for the first time granted to the Speaker to maintain his dignity, and his salary was augmented in 1761 to 2,000*l.*, and in 1765 to 4,000*l.* See Lord Macartney's sketch, Barrow's *Life of Macartney*, ii. 139, 140.

[3] Townshend to Weymouth, Oct. 22, 1769.

defence, was moved in the first days of the Session by Mr. Pery, and carried against the Government by the assistance of Shannon and Ponsonby, but the real storm broke unexpectedly from another quarter.

The Government had insisted upon maintaining the old unpopular custom of sending over to England a Money Bill, which took its origin in the Privy Council, as a cause for summoning the new Parliament; and this Bill, as was doubtless expected, was peremptorily rejected. So far the House of Commons was acting within its acknowledged right; for, though the English Government claimed the right of originating Money Bills, it never disputed the right of the Irish Parliament to reject them. A resolution, however, copied from one of those which had caused the great constitutional conflict under Lord Sydney in 1692, was now brought forward by the Opposition stating that the Money Bill was rejected 'because it did not take its rise in the House of Commons;' and by the influence of Shannon, Ponsonby, and Leinster, and in spite of the opposition of Hely Hutchinson, this resolution was carried.

The Government were much perplexed. No single prerogative claimed by the Privy Council excited such general and such vehement jealousy as the asserted right of originating Money Bills, and it was certain that the party which resisted it would carry with it the whole independent opinion of Ireland. On the other hand, the English Government had twice, in opposition to the wishes of their servants in Ireland, refused to waive the privilege. They regarded it as an essential part of the statute of Henry VII. which established the subordination of the Irish Parliament; they were perfectly resolved not to suffer it to be impugned; and they construed the resolution of the House of Commons as a distinct denial of the right. It is true that this construction might be very reasonably disputed. The

House of Commons of 1692, not content with rejecting a Money Bill because it did not take its rise with itself, had passed a resolution explicitly asserting 'that it was the sole and undoubted right of the Commons to propose heads of Bills for raising money.' The Parliament of 1769 had taken no such step. It exercised an uncontested right in rejecting the Money Bill; and, in the resolution assigning its reason for the exercise of that right, it carefully abstained from determining whether it objected to Money Bills which did not originate with itself as unconstitutional or merely as inexpedient. The Government chose to assume the former; and as Sydney had entered a protest against the proceedings of the House of Commons in the 'Journals' of the House of Lords, prorogued the Parliament and not suffered it to sit again, Townshend was directed to follow the same course, if it were possible out of the hereditary revenue alone, to support the necessary civil and military establishments. Townshend, however, reported that this was absolutely impossible, and it was resolved to proceed in a more prudent, but less ingenuous, manner. The supplies were the first things to be moved in Parliament, and Townshend resolved to show no resentment whatever till they had been granted. The parliamentary party, having struck their blow, acted with studied moderation. The supplies were readily voted, and they were voted for the usual period of two years. A vote of credit to the extent of 100,000*l.* was granted to the Government. The Augmentation scheme raising the army from 12,000 to 15,235 men, which was the favourite object of the Government and the King, was again brought forward, and the modifications that had been introduced were so acceptable that Shannon and Ponsonby, as well as Hely Hutchinson, supported it. The Duke of Leinster was the only very powerful opponent, and it was carried by a majority of more than three to

one. With a very slight reduction the whole sum demanded by the Government was granted. No previous Parliament in time of peace had shown such liberality in its grants to the Crown. Townshend, having obtained these things, thought he might safely strike his meditated blow. On December 26, 1769, he went down to the House of Lords, and, having summoned the House of Commons, he thanked them for their liberal supplies, and then delivered a solemn protest against their resolution as an infringement of Poynings' law, directed that his protest should be inserted in the 'Journals' of each House, and at once prorogued Parliament, which was not allowed again to sit for fourteen months.

In the House of Lords a resolution had shortly before been brought forward, in anticipation of such a proceeding, to the effect that no protest should be entered in its 'Journals' which did not emanate from a member and relate to the business of that House. This resolution, though very powerfully supported, was rejected by a large majority, and the protest of Lord Townshend was duly entered, but the Commons before separating forbade their clerk to enter it in their 'Journals.'[1]

The prorogation was denounced not only in Ireland but in the English Parliament as a grave attack upon parliamentary government. The Parliament had been suffered to sit for little more than two months, and it had scarcely done any business except augmenting the army and voting supplies to Government. The manner in which the resolution of the Viceroy was concealed, in order that Parliament might vote the Augmentation

[1] Adolphus, i. 377–380. *Annual Register*, 1770. 85–90. Plowden's *Historical Register*, i. 394–402. Weymouth to Townshend, Nov. 30, 1769. Townshend to Weymouth, Nov. 24, Dec. 4, 26, 1769.

Bill and the Supply Bill, was described as a fraudulent and an ungrateful trick, and the policy of the Government threw the whole country into confusion. All legislation for national objects was postponed. Temporary laws were continually lapsing and could not be renewed. Trade, public security, the supply of the capital, the public credit, all suffered from the cessation of legislation. A Parliament which had shown itself more than commonly zealous in promoting the public service was mortally affronted; in two short months all the gratitude which had been elicited by the Octennial Act was dispelled, and the Undertakers, whose unpopularity had proved so useful to the Government, were now identified with the popular party.

Fourteen agitated months followed. Public opinion had acquired an intensity and importance which it had certainly not possessed under Lord Sydney. An active Press, to which many of the leading politicians contributed, had grown up; and, though Lucas was now dying, his place was filled by abler writers. A history of the recent politics of Ireland described under the name of 'Barataria,' and some powerful but exaggerated and too rhetorical letters, very evidently modelled after Junius, attracted especial attention, and they were afterwards collected in a little volume called 'Baratariana.' The author of the history was Mr. (afterwards Sir Hercules) Langrishe, and the letters were chiefly written by Flood and by Henry Grattan, who was then a young lawyer not yet in the House of Commons. Parliament was prorogued from three months to three months, Townshend continually representing that a further delay was necessary to secure a majority; and it is a significant fact that he did not venture to follow the example of Lord Sydney, and dissolve. Petitions for the meeting of Parliament were drawn up in many quarters. The merchants of Dublin were prominent in complaining of

the course which had been pursued. The Lord Lieutenant reported that it would be wholly impossible to induce the House of Commons to rescind the obnoxious resolution; that many members of the Opposition spoke of never again voting a Supply Bill for more than six months, or of at least insisting upon annual sessions; that it was widely believed that ministers would gladly see all parliamentary discussion abolished in Ireland if they could only otherwise obtain their supplies. As long as the revenue of the country continued, as at present, insufficient for the public expenses, Townshend found that it would be impossible for Government 'to emancipate itself from the shackles of faction.'[1] There was great poverty and distress in Dublin, and generally throughout the country. Corn had risen to famine price. In the North the disturbances of the Hearts of Steel had just broken out. The revenue in all its branches had fallen so low that in October 1770 Townshend had already been obliged to take up the whole credit of 100,000*l.* in order to provide for the troops. All kinds of exports had diminished. The price of land fell; Government securities which used to bear a considerable premium could no longer circulate at par, and there were many commercial failures followed by a severe strain upon the banks. Distress always stimulates political discontent; and in this case with much reason, for it was plain that the prorogation had given a great shock to public credit, and that the Augmentation scheme had imposed a heavier burden on the country than it could bear.[2]

New embarrassments also came from England. The English ministers looked upon Irish questions

[1] Townshend to Weymouth, April 5, Sept. 25, 1770.

[2] Oct. 16, Nov. 23, Dec. 5, 1770, Townshend to Weymouth; Dec. 12, 1770, Townshend to Rochford. Plowden's *Historical Register*, p. 407.

almost exclusively in the light of their influence on English politics, and they were surrounded by grave difficulties of their own. The Wilkes riots were at their height, and the complications about the Falkland Islands had brought the country to the verge of war with Spain. Townshend, who naturally took a sanguine view of the effects of his own policy, declared that Ireland, notwithstanding the crisis, was far less torn by factious agitation than England;[1] but he urged strongly that both on political and economical grounds it was necessary to relax the commercial restrictions. He suggested that a kind of coarse woollen cloth, which was made in Ireland but not in Great Britain, might be sent without danger to the Spanish and Portuguese markets; that the importation of soap and candles from Ireland into England might be permitted on payment of the same excise which those articles paid in Great Britain; that the heavy duty imposed on checked linen sent from Ireland to England should be abolished; and that the same encouragements should be given to the manufacture of printed linens in Ireland as in England.[2] These suggestions, however, proved completely futile, and Townshend could not persuade the Government to add to their many difficulties by introducing any measure

[1] 'In justice to them [the people of this kingdom], as well as in duty to his Majesty, I must say there can be found, perhaps, no part of his dominions where the people at large are more untainted with the pernicious breath of faction, or better deserving of his royal protection and benevolence.'—March 2, 1770, Townshend to Weymouth. 'The general disposition of his Majesty's subjects has been tried and found so faithful at this crisis, unagitated by the disappointment of the leading interests, unprejudiced by the insinuations or example of other parts of his Majesty's dominions, who solicit them to make a common cause to distress his Government, they apparently remain at this hour a distinguished example of loyalty and confidence.'—Sept. 25, 1770, Townshend to Weymouth.

[2] Ibid.

displeasing to the English commercial classes. In December 1770, the English Council, under fear of a war, imposed an embargo on the export of provisions from Ireland, which greatly aggravated the distress. Not content with the recent augmentation, the ministers desired to raise still more troops in Ireland,[1] and, if possible, again to withdraw the Irish army from parliamentary control, though they had in a great degree purchased the Augmentation by partially submitting to it.[2]

Amid all these difficulties, Townshend steadily pursued his own end—the purchase or the creation of a majority in the House of Commons. Shannon was deprived of his place of Master of the Ordnance; Ponsonby was removed from the head of the Revenue Board, where he had been for twenty years; the Privy Council was almost wholly changed; the Duke of Leinster's name was struck out of it at his own request; and a crowd of subordinate placemen, who had refused to follow the Government, were driven from office. At the same time all the resources of Government patronage were strained to the utmost to secure votes. As there was no dissolution, as those who accepted places were not obliged in Ireland to go to their constituents for re-election, as the small borough system accumulated many votes in a few hands, and as Parliament was entirely unaccustomed to systematic opposition, the task was less difficult than might appear. Lord Ely, Lord Tyrone, and Lord Drogheda, who had all great parliamentary influ-

[1] Jan. 9, 1771, Townshend to Rochford.

[2] 'I must inform your Excellency in the utmost confidence, that this is thought a very desirable opportunity of recovering the exercise of his Majesty's prerogative in fixing the establishment, as was the constant practice before the late augmentation, by King's letter, without an estimate laid before the House of Commons, and a vote on the particular numbers to be kept up, or the manner of raising or forming the corps.'—Rochford to Townshend (private and confidential), Feb. 18, 1771.

ence, were with the Government. Seven important personages were at once bought over with peerages. The Prime Serjeant, Hely Hutchinson, who had distinguished himself greatly in support of the Government, obtained an addition of 1,000*l.* a year to the salary of the sinecure of Alnager which he held. Additional pensions, amounting, it is said, to not less than 25,000*l.*, were promised, and with one exception were ultimately granted,[1] and all patronage—legal, ecclesiastical, military, and political—was employed with the same end. 'The gentlemen of the House of Commons,' said an acute observer, 'were taught to look up to the Viceroy, not only as the source, but as the dispenser, of every gratification. Not even a Commission in the Revenue worth above 40*l.* a year could be disposed of without his approbation.'[2] The Chief Justiceship of the Common Pleas happened at this time to fall vacant. Hitherto it had always been given to a lawyer from England; but the necessity was so great that the rule was now given up, and it was bestowed on a member of the Irish Parliament, named Paterson, who had been conspicuous in supporting the recent measures of the Government. Where places and dignities could not be at once conferred, promises were held out; and the efforts of the Lord Lieutenant were so successful that when Parliament reassembled on February 26, 1771, he had secured a majority, and the customary address thanking the King for continuing him in office was carried by 132 to 107. It devolved upon Ponsonby as Speaker to present it; but he refused in a very dignified letter to do so, and resigned his office. Pery, who had been at least partly gained by the Court, was elected in his place.

The majority was, on the whole, maintained, though

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[1] Walpole's *George III.* iv 348, 349.

[2] Campbell's *Philosophical Survey*, p. 58.

by no means invariably, till the resignation of Lord Townshend in September 1772, but it was maintained only by the most constant and lavish corruption. Thus, in March 1771, Townshend writes to Rochford that he hears a regiment for the East India service is to be recruited in Ireland, and he wishes to recommend for the commissions. 'In the arduous work in which I am at present engaged for his Majesty's service, I stand in need of every aid.' 'The gentlemen of the country are so desirous of getting their relations and dependents into the army that I can very much oblige several very powerful friends of Government by gratifying them with commissions.' In May he asks for eight more promotions in the peerage, and for permission to recommend three or four more members of Parliament as peers. The Home Government, startled at the profusion of honours, refused at this time to make any new peers or more than five promotions; but Townshend insisted that, with the exception of the peerage to Lady Egmont, which was a personal favour to himself, every promotion or creation he had recommended was dictated by political motives.[1] He next determined to add to the number of Commissions of Account, and to divide the Customs and Excise departments. The measure, he thought, was advisable in itself, on account of the great increase of business, and it had 'been long expected by members of Parliament, who complained very much that there was so little to bestow.' The expense to the public in the article of Commissioners of Account had already increased sevenfold since 1757;[2] and when rumours of

[1] Oct. 12, 1771, Townshend to Suffolk.

[2] See the protest of nineteen peers against the increase. It is reprinted in the appendix to *Baratariana*. See, too, p. 215. Adolphus, ii. 14. The details of all these transactions will be found in numerous letters in the Record Office. Horace Walpole says that Townshend had assured North that the Irish would like

the intended change got abroad, Flood succeeded in inducing Parliament to pass a resolution stating that the existing seven Commissioners were sufficient; but, in defiance of the expressed opinion of the House, Townshend carried out his purpose. The Boards of Customs and of Excise were separated; five new places of 500*l.* a year each were created, and they were all bestowed upon members of Parliament. Ecclesiastical patronage was administered with a cynical disregard to any other motive except that of obliging parliamentary supporters;[1] and nearly the last letter of the Viceroy, before

the new board, 'as it would furnish more employments.'—*Last Journals*, i. 17. As early as 1769, Townshend had suggested that the establishment of a new 'board of accounts,' besides its other advantages, would 'open a very favourable opportunity of attaching gentlemen of a very useful turn in Parliament.'—Townshend to Weymouth, Dec. 23, 1769.

[1] Thus, the Bishopric of Ferns being vacant, he recommends the son of Mr. Bourke, a steady supporter of the Government in Parliament. and adds: 'The borough of Old Leighlin, which sends two members to Parliament, is absolutely in the disposal of the Bishop of Ferns; and your Lordship will find, by the enclosed copy of a letter received from the Rev. Mr. Bourke, that I have taken care to secure it for the use of the Government during his incumbency. . . . The gentleman whom I have recommended to be Dean of Dromore, in the room of Mr. Bourke, is brother to Major-General Hunt, whose merit and services in the field and in Parliament have been so fully set forth by me to your Lordship. . . . I have long intended to confer some considerable ecclesiastical preferment upon him, but, from a variety of other engagements to gentlemen in Parliament, I never had it in my power till now.' Dean Bourke's letter asking for the bishopric is enclosed. It does not contain a word relating to religion, but he writes: 'I beg to answer your Excellency that, if his Majesty shall be pleased to confer this mark of favour upon me, I shall always think it my duty to be ready to give my interest in the borough to such gentlemen as shall be from time to time recommended by the chief governors.'—Private, Aug. 30, 1772.—Townshend to Rochford. In December 1770, Townshend for the first time recommended one of his own chaplains for promotion. 'My great object,' he said, 'has been the promotion of the King's service, and to that I have given up, I think I may say, almost everything, civil, military, or ecclesiastical, that

he left Ireland, asked for a peerage for the wife of Hely Hutchinson, and for peerages or baronetages for seven members of Parliament who had supported him.[1]

His temper had grown savage with opposition, and he cast every vestige of decorum to the winds. He lived openly with a mistress and with her friends, often disappeared from public life to low haunts of dissipation, ridiculed all parties at his own table, scattered abroad satiric ballads on friends and foes, and boasted openly of his success in purchasing a majority.[2] He had a contempt, which no doubt was fully justified, for the venality of many of his supporters, and his letters to the Government show it without disguise. He spoke with great bitterness of 'the annual bargain which Government is at present under the sad necessity of making with ungrateful servants and prostitute opponents.' He complained that the debate which resulted in his defeat about the new Commissioners had 'opened such a scene of ingratitude in the conduct of many persons,' that there were few indeed in whom he could place much confidence; that those who owed their positions to him gave him only an occasional and uncertain support; that the Attorney-General and Prime Serjeant had grown languid; that the faction of Lord Tyrone were insatiable in their demands. 'His connections are to be gratified upon every opportunity. Mr. Fitzgibbon, who is an eminent lawyer, and in Parliament, asks a bishopric for Lord Tyrone's brother, who married his daughter; and although this gentleman is not qualified by the canon law to take a bishopric on account of his youth, Mr. Fitzgibbon, who moved the address to me at

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has fallen within my gift.'—Dec. 26, 1770, Townshend to Rochford.

[1] Sept. 9, 1772, Townshend to Rochford.

[2] Walpole's *George III.* iv. 348. *Last Journals*, i. 17, 148, 149. See, too, *Baratariana*, p. 317.

the conclusion of the last session, now makes that a reason for opposing Government with great rancour and vehemence.'[1] The main cause, he maintained, of the unpopularity of the new Board of Revenue was a fear that by a better administration the hereditary revenue would be so increased, that the Government might be made independent of parliamentary grants.

On most questions he was supported by a large majority, but his success was chequered by some damaging defeats. The increase in the number of Commissioners of Account, by King's letter in defiance of the Resolution of the House of Commons, was brought forward and censured in different forms on several occasions, and once by a majority of no less than forty-six. A pension of 1,000*l.* a year, granted for a term of lives to Dyson, an obscure and by no means reputable English follower of North, in direct violation of the royal pledge that no such pension should be given except on very urgent occasions, was likewise censured, and the ministers had the mortification of seeing some of their most devoted friends leave the House rather than support it. They only succeeded by a majority of twelve in repelling a vote of censure directed against the King's letters, reimbursing, by a fresh grant, in the case of a few eminent persons, the tax of 4*s.* in the pound, which the Irish Parliament had imposed on all places and pensions held by absentees. The omission of the clause enabling the King to remit the tax had been one of the chief recommendations of the Act; and Flood contended with reason that this omission was a complete mockery, if a new grant of 4*s.* in the pound were made to the pensioners out of Irish revenues in order to compensate them for the tax. Townshend, who had once been so

[1] Dec. 11, 1771 (secret), Townshend to Rochford. This Fitzgibbon was the father of the future Lord Clare.

greedy for popularity, now urged the Government against 'any concession to popular opinion,' and advised that the right of altering Money Bills should be exerted. A Money Bill was accordingly altered, and was at once rejected without a division, though, in order to prevent any inconvenience from the delay of supplies, its chief provisions, and even some of the amendments of the Privy Council, were at once embodied in a new Bill.

The revenue was still falling, and the financial condition was aggravated by the political crisis, for Government feared to ask for new taxes. The distress in Dublin was so acute that it was agreed to give up the public dinners commonly given by the Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, and to employ the money in charities.[1] One effect of the diminishing revenue was the diminution of the private grants which had been so much complained of. Townshend remonstrated against their magnitude in one of his speeches from the throne, and took to himself the greater part of the credit of the diminution, but it was probably more largely due to the want of funds. In November 1771 he wrote that the money grants had been 'restrained to 50,000*l.*, which is 10,000*l.* less than in the preceding session,' and 70,000*l.* less than in the preceding Viceroyalty, and he added that by far the greater part was now given 'to objects of real national utility.'[2]

The animosity against the Lord Lieutenant had risen to fever heat. In March 1771 sixteen peers drew up a protest in which they described him as a governor 'who in contempt of all forms of business and rules of decency, heretofore respected by his predecessors, is actuated only by the most arbitrary caprice, to the detriment of his Majesty's interests, the injury of this oppressed country, and the unspeakable vexation of

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1771, p. 42.

[2] Nov. 28, 1771, Townshend to Rochford.

persons of every condition.' The Press continually painted him in prose and verse as a profligate and a buffoon; and a powerful party in the House of Commons, led with great skill and eloquence by Henry Flood, made it their main object to procure his recall. Every question was contested, and the debates often extended many hours after midnight.[1] In the last months of his Viceroyalty, Townshend obtained a new strength from a quarter from which, beyond all others, it was least to be expected. He stooped to make an overture to Lord Shannon; and that peer, who had signed the protest I have just quoted, consented, for place and power, to break away from Ponsonby and once more to support the Government.[2] The Home ministers, however, wisely thought that it was time to close the disgraceful scene. In September 1772 Townshend was recalled and made Master of the Ordnance in England; and the Earl of Harcourt, who had been for some time the representative of Great Britain at the Court of Versailles, was appointed to succeed him.

No previous administration had done so much to corrupt and lower the tone of political life in Ireland, and Lord Townshend is one of the very small number of Irish Viceroys who have been personally disliked. 'The people of this kingdom,' said Sir John Davies, 'both English and Irish, did ever love and desire to be governed by great persons;' and one of the best arguments in favour of the Viceroyalty is the historical fact that under this system of government, in spite of party fluctuations and of intestine discord and disaffection, the supreme representative of English law and authority has usually been the most popular man in Ireland. The Irish character, indeed, naturally attaches itself

[1] Barrow's *Life and Writings of Lord Macartney*, ii. 156, 157.

[2] Townshend to Rochford, Feb. 29, April 13, 1772.

much more strongly to individuals than to systems, and is peculiarly susceptible to personal influences. Chesterfield, like Townshend, detested the system of Undertakers,[1] and took a large share of the government into his own hands, but he was as much beloved and respected as his successor was despised.[2] Townshend certainly desired sincerely the welfare of the country, and his abilities were superior to those of many of his predecessors and successors;[3] but he was entirely destitute of tact and judgment, and he committed a fault which is peculiarly fatal in an Irish ruler. He sought for popularity by sacrificing the dignity and the decorum of his position, and he brought both his person and his office into contempt.

Under Lord Harcourt, Irish politics suddenly calmed. The new Viceroy was an elderly nobleman of immense fortune, undistinguished in public life, and with no conspicuous ability, but painstaking, dignified, decorous, and conciliatory; and his secretary, Sir John Blaquiere, had some debating power and great skill and adroitness in managing men. As Parliament did not meet till October 1773, the Lord Lieutenant had ample time to frame his measures and obtain a personal acquaintance with the leading politicians. He found all parties prepared to welcome him; and Shannon, Leinster, Ponsonby, and Flood were all present at his early levees. He received secret instructions from Lord Rochford to aim specially at two ends. He was to discourage to the utmost of his power all applications for new peerages

[1] See the curious description of the Undertakers' system, in his *Letters*, iv. 278 (ed. 1779).

[2] See the beautiful lines addressed to the memory of Chesterfield in *Baratariana*, p. 292.

[3] Grattan, who under the signature of 'Posthumus' assailed him bitterly, had the candour to acknowledge that he had 'starts of good feeling,' and even 'parts and genius—a momentary ray, which, like a faint wintry beam, shot and vanished.'—*Baratariana*, p. 314.

and promotions, additional pensions and salaries, new offices, employments for life, and all grants of revenue, as well as the sale of offices, places, and employments. He was also to do his utmost to regain for the King the full control of the hereditary revenue by inducing the Parliament to make good by new taxation the many charges which had been thrown upon it in the form of premiums and bounties, and especially the large bounty voted in perpetuity on the inland carriage of corn.[1] Lord Shannon was warmly in favour of the Government, though, as usual, he stipulated for the distribution of a certain number of appointments and promotions among his followers as the price of his services.[2] In Parliament there was little opposition, and in his first session Harcourt obtained great popularity by a measure reuniting the Boards of Excise and of Customs which had been divided under his predecessor. It is not, I think, now possible to pronounce any decisive opinion on the merits of this change. Townshend always maintained that, apart from its advantage in giving additional patronage to the Government, the division would greatly improve the hereditary revenue by a more efficient management; and his secretary, Macartney, states that in the year that followed it, the revenue was more by 48,000*l.* than in the year that preceded it;[3] but the revenue had been already increasing before the shock that was given to public credit by the prorogation, and it is idle to speculate how much was due to an improved method of

[1] Rochford to Harcourt (secret and confidential), Oct. 26, 1772. See on this bounty, *supra*, p. 58.

[2] He asked for one peerage, one pension, and four appointments. —Harcourt to North, Dec. 20, 1772. A large number of the despatches relating to this administration are in a special collection formed by Sir J. Blaquiere, and now at the Record Office. Most of the more important letters have been privately printed in the Harcourt Papers—a large and interesting collection of historical documents.

[3] Barrow's *Life and Writings of Macartney*, ii. 158, 159.

collection. It is, however, certain that the expense of the collection had long been rapidly increasing, that the measure of Lord Townshend added no less than 16,000*l.* to that expense, and that its repeal was extremely grateful to the public. 'I am convinced,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'there is not a dispassionate, candid man in this kingdom who does not receive it as a very high mark of his Majesty's favour, and as the most essential proof that can be given of his gracious attention to the Parliament of Ireland.' Five Commissioners and four Surveyors-General were compensated by pensions for the extinction of their posts.[1]

The state of the finances was, however, very serious. 'Our distresses,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant to North in April 1773, 'have increased to such a degree that almost an entire stop is put to all payments whatsoever, except for the sustenance of the army, and at times it has been found difficult to find money even for this purpose. I have reason to think that the arrears upon the Establishment by Christmas next will not fall short of 300,000*l.*' It was with some natural irritation under these circumstances that Harcourt learnt that it was the determination of the King to impose another heavy pension on the Irish exchequer for the benefit of the Queen of Denmark, who had just been banished on account of her alleged adultery with Count Struensee. His remonstrances, however, were vain, and Ireland had to submit to a pension of 3,000*l.* a year for this lady.[2]

[1] Barrow's *Life and Writings of Macartney*, ii. 156, 157. Harcourt to Rochford, Nov. 9, 1773.

[2] North to Harcourt, March 29, 1773. Harcourt remonstrated against this pension, April 24, 1773 (to North). On July 20, 1774, he writes: 'Whenever his Majesty shall be pleased to issue his letter for placing the Queen of Denmark on the Civil Establishment of Ireland for a pension of 3,000*l.* per annum, the necessary steps shall be taken for carrying his Majesty's pleasure into immediate execution.'

It was admitted on all sides that some further taxation was necessary for the support of the establishment, and Lord Harcourt was required not only to re-establish an equilibrium, but also to induce the Irish Parliament to impose taxation for the purpose of freeing from charges that portion of the revenue which Parliament regarded with most jealousy, and over which it had least control. The task was a difficult one; but after consultation with the chief politicians in Ireland, Harcourt concluded that there was one tax which would restore both strength and popularity to the Government, and would at the same time place the finances of the country on a sound basis. This was a tax of 2*s.* in the pound on the rents of absentee proprietors. This tax Harcourt, after mature deliberation, determined to recommend, and North agreed to accept it if it was carried in Ireland.

In the earlier periods of Irish history, when the right of Government to regulate all matters affecting the social condition of nations was much more fully recognised, several laws had been enacted in Ireland against absenteeism, and some of them had been enforced by pecuniary penalties.[1] Since the days of Swift and Prior a tax on the estates of absentees had been a favourite remedy, and it was much talked of at the time when their pensions were taxed. It was maintained that it was but a small compensation for the perpetual drain of money from the poorer to the richer country, and that the peculiar circumstances of Ireland made it perfectly equitable. Ireland had no land tax and no considerable duty on the transference of movable or immovable property, and the absentee landlord, therefore, contributed little or nothing to the Government which protected the sources of his revenue. On this ground Adam Smith,

[1] See, e.g., 28 Henry VIII. c. 3, and 10 Charles I. sess. 3, c. 21.

shortly after the discussions in the Irish Parliament, maintained in his great work, that an Irish Absentee Tax would be perfectly just as well as expedient.[1] In Ireland such a measure was naturally so popular that there was not much doubt that it would be carried;[2] but it was as naturally unpopular in England, and it remained to be seen whether English politicians would accept it.

The position of the Tory Government was clearly defined. In reply to a remonstrance from his opponents, Lord North answered in the name of the ministers that 'if the Irish Parliament should send over to England such a plan as should appear to be well calculated to give effectual relief to Ireland in its present distress, their opinion would be that it ought to be carried into execution, although a tax upon absentees should be a part of it.'[3] In confidential letters to Harcourt, North and Rochford urged that the Absentee Tax must not be suffered to stand alone, but must be part of a plan for relieving the hereditary revenue from the many burdens which had been thrown upon it, and especially from the existing premium on the carriage of corn, and for once more bringing Irish finances into a state of equilibrium. The proposed tax, North said, was extremely unpopular in England, but the Government would not flinch from its promise, provided the whole plan of the Lord Lieutenant was carried into effect. We must be able, he said, to tell the House of Commons that we found Ireland 400,000*l.* in debt, and running annually 126,000*l.*

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[1] *Wealth of Nations*, bk. v. ch. 2.

[2] 'If Government here persists in countenancing such a plan, I have no sort of doubt that it will pass the Parliament and Privy Council of Ireland, not only without difficulty, but with the greatest satisfaction and applause.'—Burke to Rockingham. Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 440.

[3] North to Devonshire, Plowden's *Historical Register*, i. 424.

into arrear, and that a plan had been devised of which the Absentee Tax is an essential part, which would make her income equal to her establishments.[1] Lord Hertford is said to have been the only member of the English Privy Council who opposed the tax.[2]

The Whig Opposition consisted of two sections, which on this question diverged widely, one of them being led by Chatham, and the other by Rockingham. Shortly after the question had been mooted in Ireland, Shelburne, who was himself a large Irish proprietor, wrote to Chatham that he had received information that the 'administration had determined, in case a Bill came from Ireland taxing the estates of non-residents, to pass it here.' Such a proceeding appeared to him 'incredibly unjust and impolitic;' he at first refused to believe it, but he had now ascertained that it was perfectly true, and he urgently called upon Chatham to guide his judgment. Chatham, as he himself says, considered the question long and carefully, and he answered in two extremely remarkable letters which altogether changed the views of his correspondent. They are entirely consistent with the doctrine which Chatham always maintained about American taxation, and also with the position the Irish House of Commons had so often claimed in the discussions about Money Bills.

'My opinion,' he wrote, 'after weighing again and again the whole matter, is that it is most advisable not to meddle in urging the royal prerogative to reject the Bill for taxing absentees, should such a Bill be sent over. The operation of the Bill is excessively severe no doubt against absentees; but the principle of that severity seems founded in strong Irish policy, which is to compel more of the product of the improved estates

[1] North to Harcourt, Oct. 29. Rochford to Harcourt, Nov. 26, 1773.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 436.

of that kingdom to be spent by the possessors there amongst their tenants and in their own consumptions rather than here in England, and in foreign parts. England, it is evident, profits by draining Ireland of the vast incomes spent here from that country. But I could not, as a peer of England, advise the King, on principles of indirect, accidental English policy, to reject a tax on absentees sent over here as the genuine desire of the Commons of Ireland acting in their proper and peculiar sphere, and exercising their inherent, exclusive right by raising supplies in the manner they judge best. . . . The fitness or justness of the tax in question I shall not consider if the Commons of Ireland send it here. I can only ask myself this single question in that case, What ought I to advise the Crown to do with it? The line of the Constitution—a line written in the broadest letter through every page of the history of Parliament and people—tells me that the Commons are to judge of the propriety and expediency of supplies. All opposition to be made to them is in its place during the pendency of any such Bill, by petition or by members in the House; or for repeal if inconvenience be found to result from a tax; but to advise the Crown to substitute in the first instance the opinion of the taxed, in the place of the judgment of the representative body, repugns to every principle I have been able to form to myself concerning the wise distribution of powers lodged by the Constitution in various parts respectively of the legislature. This power of the purse in the Commons is fundamental and inherent; to translate it from them to the King in Council is to annihilate Parliament.'[1]

Had Chatham at the time he wrote these weighty words been in the full vigour of health and influence the Absentee Tax might have passed without difficulty, but

[1] Chatham *Correspondence*, iv. 296–308.

he wrote from a bed of sickness, and some of the leading members of the Rockingham section of the Opposition belonged to the very class on whom the tax would fall. They resolved to resist it to the utmost, and to resist it not only by their influence in the Irish Parliament, but also, if it passed that body, by employing English parliamentary pressure to compel the ministers to reject it.

To attain this object a remonstrance against the tax signed by five great Whig peers, Devonshire, Rockingham, Bessborough, Milton, and Upper Ossory, and addressed to Lord North, was presented and widely circulated. The remonstrants stated that they possessed large landed properties in both kingdoms; that their ordinary residence was in England, to which country some of them were attached not only by the ties of birth and early habit, but also by those of indispensable public duties; that they had not hitherto considered such residence a delinquency to be punished or a political evil to be corrected by the penal operation of a partial tax; that they claimed the right of free subjects to choose their residence in any part of his Majesty's dominions, and that they could not refrain from expressing their astonishment at hearing that it was proposed to stigmatise them by a fine for living in the country which was the chief member of the British Empire and the residence of the common Sovereign. Such a scheme would be injurious to England, but it would not be less injurious to Ireland. It would lower the value of all landed property there. It would impose upon it restrictions unknown in any other part of the British dominions, and, indeed, of the civilised world. It would lead directly to the separation of the two kingdoms both in interest and in affection.[1]

[1] This remonstrance has often been printed. See, e.g., Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 227, 228.

This letter became the manifesto of the Rockingham party on the question, though it was not accepted without some private hesitation, and two curious letters are preserved, written by the Duke of Richmond and Sir G. Savile, questioning its arguments. It was not surprising, they said, that the Irish, who in every instance were so unjustly treated by England, should endeavour to recover by direct taxation some part of the money which regularly goes out of their country, and which England will not allow them a fair chance of recovering by commerce and manufactures. The remonstrants ask why they should be debarred by an Absentee Tax from the full enjoyment and profits of their estates because they lived in England, as if such residence were a crime. The Irish trader or even landlord might ask in his turn why economical restraints should deprive him of the free enjoyment and full profits of his trade and of the produce of his land simply because he lived in Ireland. It is useless to argue the question on the supposition that the two countries are one. In money matters they are emphatically two, for they have separate purses, different taxes, distinct and, in some respects, hostile commercial systems. If a State finds that some of its subjects, by enjoying their property in one particular way, become less useful to their country, a tax may surely be imposed to compensate the public for the difference. At the same time, they add, though the Irish were very excusable in wishing for this tax, the English would be inexcusable in granting it. The interests of the two countries were in conflict, and the power lay with England.[1]

The remonstrance of the five peers of which I have given a short abstract is, as a composition, one of the most perfect State papers of the time, and few persons

[1] Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 230–234

who read it can fail to trace it in the master pen of the greatest Irishman then living. The truth is that Edmund Burke had on this question thrown himself with extreme vehemence in opposition to the predominating sentiments of his fellow-countrymen. It is idle to speculate how far he was influenced by the party feeling or the private friendship which so often swayed his judgment, but no one who reads his letters to Rockingham and to Sir Charles Bingham,[1] can doubt the energy of his conviction or fail to be struck with the variety, subtlety, and ingenuity of the arguments with which he enforced it. By the very nature of things, he maintained, the central Parliament of a great, heterogeneous empire must exercise a supreme, superintending power, and regulate the polity and economy of the several parts as they relate to one another; and it is therefore of the utmost importance to Ireland that persons connected with her by property or early prepossessions should find their way into the British Legislature. Under the system of divided properties this had always been the case, but the direct tendency of an Absentee Tax was to prevent it. It would do more. It was a virtual declaration that England was a foreign country. It was a renunciation of the principle of common naturalisation which runs through the whole empire. It was the beginning of a war of retaliation carried on by a weak and dependent nation upon one which was incomparably more powerful. At present, an Irishman, when he sets his foot in England, becomes to all intents and purposes an Englishman; but if Irishmen treat residence in Great Britain as a political evil to be discouraged by penal taxes, they will at last find it neces-

[1] The letter to Rockingham is in Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 434–445. The letter to Sir Charles Bingham (a member of the Irish Parliament) is in Burke's *Works* (ed. 1812), ix. 134–147.

sary to renounce the privileges and benefits connected with such residence. They will be excluded from English official life, from the English Commons, from the English peerage. The necessary effect of the measure will be to separate the countries as much as possible by preventing any one from living in the one who is connected by property with the other. Intermarriages and mutual inheritance, which bind countries more closely than any laws, will become rarer. Obstacles will be thrown in the way of foreign travel. Suitors will be fined for their necessary residence in England while prosecuting their appeals to the ultimate Court of Judicature. Guardians will no longer give Irish minors the benefit of an English education. Invalids will no longer seek health, or men of damaged fortune a period of retrenchment in a foreign land. Englishmen will never again invest their capital or their skill in Irish property. The British Legislature may possibly retaliate by a tax on the English property of residents in Ireland; the colonies will probably follow the Irish example, and thus a principle of disunion and separation will pervade the whole empire;[1] the bonds of common interests, knowledge, and sympathy which now knit it together will be everywhere loosened, and a narrow, insulated and local feeling and policy will be proportionately increased. Nor was the tax merely impolitic, it was also flagrantly unjust. Ireland, which is a subordinate part of the empire, gives laws to the whole, and 'makes a tax of regulation to prevent the residence

[1] 'Lord Mansfield has told some of the Cabinet in confidence . . . that the proposed tax upon the land of absentees is grounded upon a policy which has always been condemned in the Privy Council; that a similar Act which was sent over some time ago by one of the colonies was rejected with indignation; and that if way is given to this measure we may expect proposals of the same nature from all our Colonies.'—North to Harcourt, Oct. 29, 1773. *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 80–82.

of its proprietors of land, in the metropolis of the Empire.' 'Is there a shadow of reason that because a Lord Rockingham, a Duke of Devonshire, a Sir George Savile, possess property in Ireland which has descended to them without any act of theirs,' they must during half the year abandon their seats, their political and family duties in England, for a residence in Ireland?

At the same time it is worthy of notice that Burke feared greatly that the proposed measure would not merely pass in Ireland but would be accepted with perfect readiness by the English people. The estimate formed by a great Irish writer of the state of English public opinion on this question is very remarkable. 'There is a superficial appearance of equity in this tax which cannot fail to captivate almost all those who are not led by some immediate interest to an attentive examination of its intrinsic merits. The mischiefs which such a measure may produce are remote and speculative. So they will appear to the people in general. They will not believe that this tax will drive a great many to a residence in Ireland. They think that this country may still enjoy the expenditure of the greater part of the Irish estates. While the part which is cut off by this tax is in appearance applied to the support of military and other establishments, which without the tax might otherwise fall more directly upon England, they will think themselves indemnified for the loss of that ten per cent. which is taken from the great system of English circulation. As to the great maxims of policy which are subverted by the principle of this tax, I am much mistaken if the people of this country, who have a perfect contempt for all such things, will not consider them on this, as upon so many other things —a mere visionary theory.'[1]

[1] Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 441, 442.

The agitation which Burke and the other members of the Rockingham party began, soon brought forth its fruits. The great English companies, which were large owners of Irish property, had their centre in the city. The flame of opposition spread rapidly, and Rockingham made a list of upwards of one hundred persons of large property who were directly interested in the measure. Though Chatham and Shelburne stood apart, it appeared that the question was likely speedily to create a formidable and popular opposition, and to spread a wave of excitement over the whole kingdom.[1] The King, who was steadily hostile to every measure which appeared like a concession, whether it was constitutional, commercial, or religious, disliked the Absentee Tax, and had only consented to it reluctantly in order to free the hereditary revenue from the corn bounty.[2] Rochford was much alarmed, and he at once wrote to Harcourt stating that serious difficulties were arising in England, but at the same time repeating his pledge that he would support the Bill in Council if it were passed by the Irish Parliament.

The reply of Lord Harcourt was long and very curious.[3] Considering, he said, that the measure affected the property of some of the most important men in England, and considering the clamour they had raised, he was deeply grateful for the support which he had received 'upon a point wherein' he 'certainly stood committed to this kingdom.' 'The decided opinions of some of the wisest and most experienced men in this kingdom, and the general wishes of the

[1] Chatham *Correspondence*, iv. 304.

[2] *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, i. 155-159. 'Every person here from the lowest to *the very first person* in the kingdom, will be extremely glad to hear that it [the Absentee Tax] has failed in Ireland.' North to Harcourt, Nov. 2, 1773. *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 97, 98.

[3] Harcourt to Rochford, Nov. 9, 1773.

people for half a century past, added to the exigencies of government,' had led him to press earnestly for this tax as the best fitted to relieve the public credit and conciliate the body of the nation; but as soon as he found that it was likely in the most remote degree to imperil the safety of the administration in England, he resolved to waive it. 'In consequence of that determination,' he adds, 'we have used our industry to divert the progress of this tax for the present, and we mean to allow it to be moved in the House by a certain wild, inconsistent gentleman, who has signified such to be his intention, which will be sufficient to damn the measure were no other means to be employed against it. Opposition are first made to startle and by degrees grow alarmed at it, as an approach to a general land tax. As to our own people, by speaking indecisively and equivocally to those who seem to wish [*sic*] against it, and by setting those at defiance who wish to extort favours by a compliance with any requisition of Government, men in general have been brought to hold themselves in suspense with regard to it.' The letters of the five peers, in which it was so strongly maintained that the effect of the measure would be to lower the value of Irish land, were widely circulated. 'Having,' writes the Lord Lieutenant, 'or at least wishing, to give up the object, I will endeavour to make these letters a means of condemning the tax in the House of Commons. It will in course grow a topic of general disquisition and discussion, and from a capricious instability observable in the opinions of the people of this country, I imagine that by leaving men now totally to their own inclinations, this, now so much sought for boon, may die in a few days, and if it should not of itself, every little addition to what has already been done on our part shall be made to destroy it.' 'There is not a man in this kingdom,' he added, 'who either from station or abili-

ties was entitled, or from whom any probable advantage could be gained, with whom, either directly in conversation with myself or through my chief Secretary, every proper confidence has not been reposed.'

The measure is said to have been introduced by Flood.[1] It is probable, however, that he was merely the chief speaker in its favour, for, although Harcourt personally disliked him, and although in the course of his recent opposition Flood had offended the most important personages in Parliament, it is extremely unlikely that Harcourt would have referred to him in the terms I have quoted. His parliamentary influence during the last few years had been great and acknowledged. Harcourt fully recognised it by the very high offer he made to attach him to his Government, and Burke regarded his determination to favour the Absentee Tax as one of the most serious elements in its favour.[2] For the rest, the designs of the ministers were very skilfully accomplished. Some no doubt opposed the tax because they imagined that they would thus embarrass the Government, and others because they knew that the Government secretly desired it; the

[1] Hardy's *Charlemont*, i. 331. Chatham *Correspondence*, iv. 296. In the *Life of Flood* by Warden Flood (p. 91), the tax is said to have been first proposed by 'Mr. Fortescue and Mr. Flood.' Harcourt says that 'the wild and inconsistent gentleman' moved a resolution in favour of an Absentee Tax without specifying the amount, or the length of residence that was required; that this resolution was withdrawn as too vague, and that Oliver, the member for the county of Limerick, then moved a tax of 2*s.* in the pound on all landowners who did not reside six months in the year in Ireland. Harcourt to North, Nov. 26, 1773. There are no Irish Parliamentary debates published for this period.

[2] 'It is not impossible that Flood will be the mover of the tax. It will bring him over to administration with a good grace. He will have one of the best horses of popularity in Lord Chatham's stables. He will have the merit of coming over to a Government entirely in an Irish interest.'—Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 438.

great absentee proprietors had their own connections and their own boroughs, and considerations about a possible depreciation in the value of land weighed heavily on a Parliament of landlords. Flood and Brownlow strongly argued that if the tax threw much Irish land into the market, the absentee proprietors would at least find it their interest to sell it in small portions and to persons of moderate properties, and that this would produce that division of property and that residence of proprietors which it ought to be the special object of the Irish Legislature to encourage. 'The justice and equity of the tax,' Lord Harcourt wrote, 'were admitted on all hands;' but the suspicion spread far and fast that it was the first step in a plan of the English ministry to introduce a general land tax.

The speech of Sir John Blaquiere appears to have been a model of adroitness. He rose ostensibly to support the measure. He had heard it, he said, very lately described as the salvation of the country, and he had not yet 'quite given up the idea,' though his faith may have been 'something staggered by the variety of opinions which now obtain.' He felt that it was not for him, who had not a foot of ground in Ireland, to dictate to those who had so much, and he would therefore not attempt on a question which so vitally affected the value of the property of landowners to control votes or strain allegiance. 'I will lay my heart upon your table,' he concluded. 'Under the strange revolution of sentiment which this subject has already undergone, let it surprise no man if upon this occasion it is seen that my best friend and I divide on different sides of the House.'[1] Some of the leading interests in the

[1] Enclosed by Harcourt to Rochford. Walpole, though he was aware that North had determined at the last moment to relinquish the tax, was quite ignorant of the secret policy of the Castle. He says that the tax was rejected in Ireland, 'though

House turned against the measure, and it was thrown out by 120 to 106. An attempt was made irregularly and by surprise to revive the subject, and the Attorney-General, to the great indignation of Harcourt, supported it. Flood appears to have spoken with more than common energy and power, and the Lord Lieutenant complained to North of 'the frenzy which at this moment seems to possess almost universally in favour of the measure, the mind of every member of the House of Commons,' but 'by most dexterous management,' and after a debate that lasted nine hours, the House was persuaded to acquiesce in its own previous decision, and the Absentee Tax was thus defeated in the Irish House of Commons without any open hostility on the part of the Government.[1]

This very curious episode was the most remarkable Irish event in the first year of the administration of Harcourt. Parliament soon passed into its usual habit of giving the Government on most questions an almost unanimous support, though on a few particular points it jealously maintained its independence of action. The Absentee Tax having failed, it was imperatively necessary to seek new resources, for between the Lady Day of 1763 and the Lady Day of 1773 the National Debt had

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the Castle, all triumphant, and which had just had a majority of fifty, and had gained over Mr. Flood, the best orator and warmest patriot in the Opposition, had exerted all its strength to carry it.' —*Last Journals*, i. 273. North's real sentiments were very clearly expressed: 'Certainly no event could have given me greater comfort than the rejection of the Absentee Tax.' North to Harcourt, Dec. 9, 1773.

[1] Harcourt to North, Nov. 27 and Nov. 30, 1773. Harcourt writes: 'Mr. Flood was violent and able in behalf of the measure in a degree almost surpassing everything he had ever uttered before. It would appear as if he meant to take this occasion of utterly crushing to destruction the Duke of Leinster's party and Mr. Ponsonby, against the latter of whom he made such a personal attack as that poor gentleman, I fear, will never recover.'

increased from 521,161*l.* to 999,686*l.*[1] In order to meet immediate wants 265,000*l.* was raised by the method of Tontine Annuities and Stamp Duties, and several other new duties were imposed, which it was computed would probably add nearly 100,000*l.* a year to the revenue.[2] The House of Commons showed no indisposition to grant these supplies, but it showed great and general indignation when it found that its Supply Bills were largely altered in England. Friends of the Government and independent members were on this point perfectly agreed, and the two great Supply Bills were almost unanimously rejected. 'The conduct of the members,' wrote Harcourt, 'was moderate and respectful to Government,' but after 'their strenuous and liberal efforts to support the King's establishment in a time of difficulty and distress,' the alterations appeared, even to the friends of the Government, 'wanton, unnecessary, and unkind,' and it is evident that Harcourt himself leaned towards this opinion. The Commons having asserted their rights by rejecting the altered Bills, proceeded to re-enact them with new titles and in a form which embodied many of the amendments that had been made.[3]

As the difficulties of supporting the augmented establishment became more apparent, and especially after the rejection of the Absentee Tax, the commercial restrictions were more impatiently borne, and Pery, as Speaker of the House of Commons, at the close of the Session of 1773, in presenting the Supplies to the Lord Lieutenant, made a formal remonstrance on the subject.[4] A Habeas Corpus Bill was again carried in

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[1] Commons' *Journals*, xvi. 249.
[2] Ibid. xvi. 332.
[3] Dec. 25, 27, 30, 1773, Harcourt to Rochford. Jan. 14, 1774, Rochford to Harcourt.
[4] Commons' *Journals*, xvi. p. 332.

Ireland and again rejected in England,[1] and the question of the Perpetual Duties which had been granted under the Duke of Bedford on the Inland Carriage of Corn was again brought forward. The Home Government were extremely anxious that these duties should be wholly repealed, but Harcourt assured them that there were not ten members in the House of Commons who would vote for such a measure. Harcourt appears to have taken infinite pains in the matter, and for several weeks he was engaged in constant private interviews with members of the House of Commons. At last, to his great delight, the House of Commons was induced partially to relieve the hereditary revenue of the burden, by passing a resolution to the effect that whenever the bounty on the inland carriage of corn exceeded 35,000*l.* in the year, Parliament should impose fresh taxes to make good the excess.[2]

This concession, however, which the Lord Lieutenant deemed a matter of vital importance, was largely due to the support the Government gave to a measure granting bounties upon the export of Irish corn to foreign countries when its home price fell below a certain level.[3] These bounties were below those which were given to English corn, so that the English corn merchant would still have an advantage in foreign markets, and the Act was limited to five years, but the Irish gentry believed the measure to be of extreme benefit to tillage. Flood appears to have taken a leading part in bringing it forward,[4] but it was solely due to the strenuous persistence of Lord Harcourt that the English Government were persuaded to accept it. 'I must take occasion to say,' he wrote in a confidential

[1] March 6, 1774, Harcourt to Rochford.

[2] March 15, 1774. Harcourt to Rochford. Commons' *Journals*, xvi. p. 502.

[3] 13 & 14 George III., c. xi.

[4] Commons' *Journals*, xvi. 487.

despatch to Rochford, 'that nothing can be so grateful to me, after having been the instrument of obtaining so much from this people, as to put it in my power to make them some return. For, notwithstanding the mode in which business has been conducted, gentlemen very well know how much they have strained the means of this country to satisfy his Majesty of their loyalty and attachment, and I am fearful they would not think themselves kindly treated if some return was not to be made.'[1]

The relations of Lord Harcourt with the Irish Parliament at the close of 1774 were as friendly as possible, and the two most conspicuous debaters in the House of Commons soon after received favours from his hand. Hely Hutchinson had for a long time disliked the profession of the law, and had desired to turn to a wholly different sphere. The great position of Provost of Trinity College having fallen vacant, he asked for and obtained it, the statute which required that the Provost should be in holy orders being dispensed with in his favour. Hutchinson, on accepting this post, resigned the office of Prime Serjeant, and the sinecure of Alnager, as well as his professional practice; but in spite of these sacrifices, the new appointment did not escape severe and merited blame. There was a manifest impropriety in making the headship of a great University a prize to be given for mere parliamentary services, and in passing over the claims of the resident fellows in favour of a man who had no experience in academic pursuits, and only a faint tincture of academic learning. Hutchinson continued to retain his seat in Parliament, and his name for some years longer occurs frequently in Irish politics.

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[1] Private. March 15, 1774. Harcourt to Rochford. April 20, Rochford to Harcourt.

A more important and a more contested appointment was that of Henry Flood, who, after a long period of negotiation, accepted in October 1775 the position of Vice-Treasurer. This very remarkable man had for some years been rising rapidly as a debater to the foremost place in the House of Commons. His eloquence does not, indeed, appear to have been of the very highest kind. It was slow, formal, austere, and somewhat heavy. When he passed, late in life, into the English Parliament, he failed, and Wraxall gave a reason for his failure which is so curious as indicating a great change that has taken place in national tastes that the reader must pardon me if I make it the text of a short digression. 'The slow, measured, and sententious style of enunciation which characterised his eloquence,' says Wraxall, 'however calculated to excite admiration it might be in the senate of the sister kingdom, appeared to English ears cold, stiff, and deficient in some of the best recommendations of attention.'[1] In truth, the standard of taste prevailing in Ireland, or at least in Dublin, during the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, appears to have been as far as possible removed from the exaggerated, over-heated, and over-ornamented rhetoric which is so commonly associated with the term Irish eloquence. The style of Swift, the style of Berkeley, and the style of Goldsmith are in their different ways among the most perfect in English literature, but they are simple sometimes to the verge of baldness, and they manifest a much greater distaste for ornamentation and rhetorical effect than the best contemporary writings in England. Burke had by nature one of the most exuberant of human imaginations, and his literary taste was by no

[1] *Memoirs*, vol. iii. 587. This account is fully corroborated by Hardy.—*Life of Charlemont*, i. 279-280. See, too, *Parl. Hist.* xxiv. 58.

means pure; but it is very remarkable that it was not until a long residence in England had made him indifferent to the canons of Irish taste that the true character of his intellect was fully disclosed. His treatise on 'The Sublime and Beautiful,' though written on a subject which lends itself eminently to ornamentation, is severe and simple to frigidity, and his historical articles in the 'Annual Register,' though full of weighty and impressive passages, do not show a trace of the gorgeous rhetoric which adorns the 'Reflections on the French Revolution,' and the 'Letters on a Regicide Peace.' With very different degrees of literary merit, the same quality of eminent simplicity and sobriety marks the writings of Hely Hutchinson, of Hutcheson the philosopher, of Henry Brooke, of Leland, Curry, Gordon, and Warner, and, as I have already noticed, of the more important pamphlets of the time.[1] It represented, no doubt, in a great measure, the reaction of the cultivated taste of the nation against popular and prevalent faults, just as it is common to find among the illustrious writers and critics who have in the present century arisen in America a severity of taste and of literary judgment, and a fastidious purity of expression rarely equalled among good English writers.

The influence of this taste was naturally felt in Parliament. Anthony Malone, who was long the most conspicuous man in the Irish House of Commons, was described as possessing 'the clearest head that ever conceived, and the sweetest tongue that ever uttered

[1] I am happy to be able to support my judgment on this point by the high authority of Sir James Mackintosh, who describes the writings of Berkeley as 'beyond dispute the finest models of philosophical style since Cicero,' and adds, 'Perhaps he also surpassed Cicero in the charm of simplicity, a quality eminently found in Irish writers before the end of the eighteenth century.'—Mackintosh's *Dissertation on Ethical Philosophy*, p. 214.

the suggestions of wisdom;'[1] but his speeches appear to have been more like the charges of a great judge than the harangues of a popular tribune. His contemporaries dwell upon the exquisite perspicuity and plausibility of his narrative, upon his rare power of clear, terse, and cogent reasoning, upon the entire absence in his speeches of passion, imagination, and rhetorical ornament.[2] Hely Hutchinson is said to have been the first person who introduced a polished and ornamental style of speaking into the Irish Parliament, and the highly imaginative, though eminently terse, eloquence of Grattan, the popular character which Irish politics assumed in 1782, the influence which Kirwan, and perhaps the early Methodist preachers, exercised upon the pulpit, all conspired to change gradually the popular type. It is probable, however, that of all the great orators who, in the present century, have adorned the British Parliament, the most severely simple, the most sternly argumentative was Plunket, who was born and educated in Ireland, and who first displayed his genius in the Irish Parliament.

Plunket was probably a greater orator than Flood, but the speeches of the latter, though marred by an Irish accent which had survived an Oxford education, by a cumbrous and pedantic taste, and by a deficiency in those lighter gifts which enable an orator to deal gracefully with small subjects, exercised an influence of the highest kind.[3] His power of conducting long trains

[1] *Baratariana*, p. 171.

[2] The expressions of Cicero about Scaurus were quoted as peculiarly applicable to Malone. 'Gravitas summa et naturalis quædam inerat auctoritas, non ut causam, sed ut testimonium dicere putares cum pro reo dicreet.' See Grattan's *Life*, i. 61–62. *Baratariana*, 171–174. Grattan's *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 117.

[3] Grattan said of him: 'He had great powers, great public effect, he persuaded the old, he inspired the young. . . . On a small subject he was miserable; put into his hand a distaff, and

of sustained, accurate, and intricate reasoning, his quickness and dexterity in reply, the measured severity of his sarcasm and invective, and his consummate mastery of the constitutional and financial questions which he especially treated, placed him at once in the foremost rank. One of the ablest of his contemporary admirers said of him that, on whatever subject he spoke, 'he spoke with such knowledge, accuracy, and perspicuity that one would imagine that subject had been the chief object of his inquiry;'[1] and in the most brilliant period of the career of Grattan there were always some good judges who maintained that in the more solid intellectual qualities Flood was his superior. He had entered Parliament in 1759, during the administration of the Duke of Bedford, and had early identified himself with three great questions, the limitation of the duration of Parliament, the creation of a militia, and the assertion of the independence of Parliament, which was violated by Poynings' law, or rather, as was contended by Flood, by the interpretation which

like Hercules, he made sad work of it, but give him the thunderbolt and he had the arm of a Jupiter.'—*Miscellaneous Works*, p. 118. Hardy says he was 'a consummate member of Parliament. Active, ardent, and persevering, his industry was without limits. In advancing, and, according to the Parliamentary phrase, driving a question, he was unrivalled. . . . When attacked he was always most successful. . . . His introductory or formal speeches were often heavy and laboured, yet still replete with just argument.'—*Life of Charlemont*, i. 279. Barrington thought him a greater reasoner than Grattan (*Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ch. xvii.), but Hely Hutchinson, who was nearly always opposed to him, ridiculed his 'sevenfold phraseology,' and Eden—who, however, came in contact with him in the most unfortunate part of his career—was greatly disappointed with his speaking.—Auckland *Correspondence*, i. 319. His speech defending his whole career from the attack of Grattan in 1783 seems well reported, and is certainly extremely able. There is a striking sketch of the life and character of Flood in the *Dublin University Magazine* for 1836.

[1] Langrishe in *Baratariana*, p. 50.

the judges in 1692 had placed upon that law. Like all Irish politicians, however, his opposition was confined to a few special questions. He was an admirer and acquaintance of Chatham, and when Bristol became Lord Lieutenant, Flood declared his full intention of supporting him, and seems to have been on the point of taking office.[1] His attitude towards Townshend was, at first, very friendly, and Townshend, as we have seen, was especially anxious to secure his services. Flood maintained, however, that the augmentation of the establishment was too heavy a burden for the finances; he tried to press his rival scheme of a militia, and after the sudden and final prorogation of Parliament, he, for the first time, went into violent, constant, and systematic opposition. His speeches against the Government were then incessant and very bitter, and he drew up most of the protests that were entered in the Journal of the House of Lords. The main object of the opposition at this time was to compel the recall of Townshend, and when Harcourt came over, the party naturally dissolved. After some hesitation and long negotiation, Flood abandoned all attempts at opposition, and accepted the great office of Vice-Treasurer.

Inquiries into the secret motives that governed politicians are usually among the most worthless and untrustworthy portions of history. Except in the case of a very few of the most conspicuous figures, our materials for deciding are utterly inadequate, and the best contemporary judgments are largely based upon indications of character which are much too subtle and evanescent to pass into the page of history. Looking, however, at the facts as they have been stated, it is not easy to see why the conduct of Flood, in accepting office, should have been stigmatised as dishonourable.

[1] Chatham *Correspondence*, iii. 166, 167.

At no period of his life had he entered into an engagement not to do so. The violent and systematic opposition in which he was engaged during the latter part of the administration of Townshend grew out of the distinctive policy of that Viceroy, and naturally terminated with his recall. It was, no doubt, true that Poynings' law could not be discussed by a statesman in office, but in the state of parties in 1774 there did not seem the smallest probability of discussing it with effect. The limitation of Parliament had been secured. A militia was hardly needed, since the establishment had been augmented, and although Charlemont strongly maintained that a permanent and well-organised opposition was essential to the healthy growth of the Irish Constitution,[1] the fact remained that after the recall of Townshend such an opposition did not exist. It was surely open to an honest politician to contend that, under these circumstances, he could gain more for the country by co-operating with the Government than by opposing it. The Government of Harcourt was certainly not deserving of unqualified reprobation. The reunion of the divided revenue board, the Absentee Tax, and the bounty on the exportation of corn were three measures in which Flood took a keen interest. They were all of them ostensibly supported, and two of them were actually carried by the Government. By accepting the office of Vice-Treasurer, Flood broke the custom which reserved that post for Englishmen. He obtained a seat in the Privy Council where questions of vital interest to Ireland were decided, and he might very reasonably expect a great extension of his influence. To his own friends he justified his conduct by the utter impossibility of inducing any considerable body of men to remain in steady opposition after the recall of Towns-

[1] *Original Letters to the Right Hon. Henry Flood*, p. 82.

heard. 'The only way,' he said, 'anything could be effected for the country, was by going along with Government, and making their measures diverge towards public utility.'[1] He spoke also of the advantage of restoring to the kingdom a great office which had been alienated from it, and his public language, when he was called upon, some years later, to defend his conduct, is perfectly consistent with these views. Charlemont, whose own character was of the highest kind, and who had hitherto been one of the most intimate friends and one of the warmest admirers of Flood, never forgave him for having accepted office; but he acknowledged that his 'chief' reason was the incessant falling off of his party after the recall of Townshend, and 'the belief that by accepting a great and apparently ministerial office he would be more able to serve his country.'[2] It is difficult to see why reasons so plausible, and indeed so cogent, should not have been deemed sufficient.

The truth is, that there was much in the public character and in the subsequent career of Flood which led men to judge him with severity. By the lowest form of political temptation he does not seem to have been seriously influenced. It was, no doubt, sometimes said that his object was to repair the waste which a recent election had made in his estate; but those who knew him best appear to have agreed that money was no consideration to him, and in this respect, indeed, a childless man, with a fortune of about 5,000*l.* a

[1] Grattan's *Life*, i. 206. So on another occasion he said 'that no good could be done for Ireland without taking office; for the influence of the Crown was so great it was not possible to oppose it, and the only way to serve the country was to serve her when in office.'—Ibid. iii. 342.

[2] *MS. Autobiography.* The independent judgment of Hardy is much the same. See his *Life of Charlemont*, i. 356–358.

year, in Ireland, and in the eighteenth century, was not much tempted. Nor was he ever accused of seeking or desiring a peerage, which was the usual bribe held out to rich country gentlemen. His prevailing fault was an excessive love of power and reputation, which led him extravagantly to overrate his own political importance, to exaggerate his services, to look with great jealousy on any competitor for fame, and to aspire on all occasions to exercise an absolute influence on those about him. In private life, his hospitable and convivial manners, his love of field sports, his excellent classical scholarship, his great patience under contradiction and his very considerable conversational powers made him generally popular; and Burke, Charlemont, and Grattan were at one time among his friends. But in public life a strong personal element seems to have always mixed with his politics. He was jealous, domineering, irritable, easily imagining slights, prone to take sudden turns of conduct through motives of personal ambition or personal resentment, more feared than trusted by those with whom he acted. The story of his negotiation for office, as it is related in the confidential letters of Harcourt and Blaquiere, leaves a very unfavourable impression on the mind, though allowance should be made for the fact that we have not got his own account of the transaction, and that some of the letters from the Castle were written under the influence of great irritation. Immediately after the death of Provost Andrews, Harcourt wrote to Rochford recommending Hely Hutchinson for that post, and proposing that the sinecure office of Alnager, hitherto held by Hutchinson, should be bestowed on Flood during his Majesty's pleasure, with a salary of 1,000*l.* a year. 'By these arrangements,' he said, 'the great and ancient office of Alnager, which is now granted for years, will be brought back to the Crown, and Government will obtain the assistance of

a gentleman of powerful abilities by the acquisition of Mr. Flood. . . . The attainment of all these great points at the charge of 1,000*l.* a year, an expense so inconsiderable, . . . will, I flatter myself, be thought very good economy.'

Flood, however, not unnaturally considered an offer which placed him in a position so completely subordinate to that of Hutchinson, as little less than an insult, and an insult aggravated by a direct breach of promise. 'Mr. Flood,' writes Harcourt, 'is greatly offended that the Provostship was not offered to him. I saw him yesterday, and he complained most bitterly of the treatment he had received from Government, laying the greatest stress on the promise Mr. Blaquiere had made him that he should have the first great office that became vacant. . . . Mr. Flood took occasion to set forth his important services, which he thought very justly entitled him to the preferment, which had been given to Mr. Hutchinson without even making him a tender of it, though he did not declare whether he would have taken it if it had been offered to him. He laid great stress on the difficulties and obstructions which he could have thrown in the way had he been disposed to be adverse. . . . In answer to what I had said of Mr. Hutchinson resigning two good employments in order to be Provost, he observed he had made as great, if not a greater, sacrifice, meaning his popularity and reputation, which he had risked in support of Government, which now treated him with a degree of contempt that determined him never more to have any concerns with the Castle . . . that paid so little regard to engagements. . . . It would be a lesson for everybody to be very cautious for the future in their dealings with ministers. He said he could make it appear that he had saved the Crown more than five times the value of the favour he asked.' It appears, however that Flood had already mentioned

the office of Vice-Treasurer; and Harcourt, without venturing to hold out any strong hopes, freely acknowledged the obligations of the Government. 'I told him,' he says, in relating the interview to North, 'I thought the faith of Government was pledged to make an ample provision for him; and if it was not done, I should be ready to acknowledge he had been deceived and ill used.' He had been from the beginning fully determined, he tells Lord North, not to offer Flood the Provostship, for this was an immovable office of great influence, and it might have made him extremely formidable to the Administration, but he clearly foresaw when he recommended Hutchinson for the Provostship that he would be 'reduced to the necessity of urging Mr. Flood's request to be one of the Vice-Treasurers.'[1]

The three Vice-Treasurers for Ireland only held their offices during pleasure; but their position was one of great emolument and dignity, and it carried with it the rank of Privy Councillor in both countries. The system, however, still prevailed in full force of making lucrative offices paid out of Irish revenues rewards for English politicians living in England. This had, indeed, of late been done with unusual audacity, for Gerard Hamilton and Rigby, neither of whom had any permanent connection with Ireland, had been made, the first, Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the second, Irish Master of the Rolls for life. North admitted that these appointments were abuses, but few things could be more disagreeable to him than to relinquish any of the great prizes which were employed, according to old and well-established custom, to win or maintain English parliamentary support. 'I am very sensible,' he wrote, 'that Mr. Flood has good pretensions to as considerable an office as the Vice-Treasurership of Ireland, or, in-

[1] Harcourt to Rochford, June 19. To North, July 8, 1774.

deed, to a better. My sole objection to his having it, I will freely confess, is that I fear much blame here, and no small difficulty in carrying on the King's business, if I consent to part with the disposal of these offices which have been so long and so uniformly bestowed upon members of the British Parliament.' He considered it scarcely possible to grant the request of Harcourt, and he suggested that the ancient office of President of Munster might be revived as a sinecure, and with a large revenue attached to it.[1]

Harcourt, however, persisted in his request. He asked whether it would not be 'advisable to secure Mr. Flood almost at any expense, rather than to risk an opposition which, conducted by a man of his abilities, may render the success of Administration more precarious.' Even judging the question 'merely upon the point of public economy, putting the considerations of confidence in Government, justice for past services, and good faith totally out of the case,' it was far better to give a great office to Flood than to risk the new duties which had just been carried, and 'put an able and most active man at the head of a numerous opposition, the last session of an Octennial Parliament.' 'There can be no danger of lessening the patronage of England by lending an office for a short time, and for a very particular purpose, to support his Majesty's Government in Ireland. Successive governors must necessarily bring back to England all or most of the considerable offices of this country by the very nature of its government.' The idea of reviving the Presidency of Munster he considered wholly impracticable. The President of Munster was a kind of provincial Lord Lieutenant, with his judges, generals, army, and Privy Council, and his position was totally incompatible with the system of

[1] North to Harcourt, June 23, 1774.

government since the Revolution. Nor could a revival of obsolete and useless offices be safely attempted. 'I am persuaded,' he wrote, 'it would be easier and safer to expend 10,000*l.* in additional salaries to insignificant places now subsisting than to revive one great office grown obsolete and annex but 2,000*l.*' 'I may presume to say that the acquisition of Mr. Flood, circumstanced as things are, cannot be purchased at too dear a rate.' Considering 'the great abilities of this gentleman, and all the powers he is possessed of, how formidable he has been to former administrations, and how much more so he may be hereafter; . . . his terms, however great and exorbitant they may appear, are little in comparison to the trouble he may give, or even of the expense that may be incurred on his account, if no method can be devised to engage his service.'[1]

North yielded to the request of Harcourt, and at length authorised him to offer the Vice-Treasurership to Flood. To his extreme astonishment and indignation, however, Harcourt was met with a direct refusal. Flood declared that he had been promised the first great office that fell vacant, and should therefore have succeeded to the Provostship, and that he would not accept an office from which he might be dismissed at any moment. After considerable discussion he at last said that, owing to his regard for Lord Harcourt, he was willing to waive his just claim to a more desirable situation, and to accept the Vice-Treasurership in case it placed no additional burthen on Ireland.[2]

The indignation and perplexity of the Irish Government were very great, for arrangements had already been made to make room for Flood. Jenkinson, who had been Vice-Treasurer, had just been induced to resign

[1] Harcourt to North, July 8, Sept. 3, 1774. June 7, 1775.
[2] Ibid. August 13, 1775.

his office; he had received as compensation the office of Clerk of the Pells,[1] which Charles Fox had inherited from his brother in 1774,[2] and Fox, in his turn, had been compensated by a sum of 30,000*l.* and also by an Irish pension of 1,700*l.* a year, tenable for thirty-one years.[3] There is a considerable obscurity hanging over this transaction, which appears to have escaped the notice of the biographers of Fox, but it is certain that the pension was very soon surrendered,[4] probably because it was found that it was not compatible with a seat in the English Parliament.[5] In the meantime, however,

[1] Irish Commons' *Journals*, xvii. 233.

[2] Fox's *Correspondence*, i. 136.

[3] This was mentioned by Rockingham in the English House of Lords in 1779. *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1174. I have not been able to trace the source from which the 30,000*l.* was derived. The written agreement between Fox and Blaquiere only stated that in consideration of a pension of 1,700*l.* a year for thirty-one years Fox would resign his office of Clerk of the Pells. *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 326. For the pension, see Irish Commons' *Journals*, xvii. 116.

[4] It was surrendered on June 20, 1776. Ibid. xviii. 292.

[5] Sept. 19, 1775, North wrote to Blaquiere, 'I suppose you have heard of Mr. Fox's difficulty about his pension. It seems that no man holding a pension during pleasure or for a term of years, can sit and vote in Parliament without being liable to pay 20*l.* a day. I do not know what method he will take to secure himself. As to myself I shall certainly not molest him, but he will be in continual danger of being disturbed, and indeed of being expelled, as by another Act no person in his circumstances is capable of being elected. In truth I believe he is utterly disqualified from sitting in Parliament by his acceptance of the pension. This you will keep secret, for, though I fear it will be known, it ought not to be known by you or me.'—Blaquiere, in his reply (Sept. 27, 1775), says that Fox had asked his opinion on the question of the compatibility of a pension with a seat in Parliament, and Blaquiere had professed his ignorance. 'Had this matter passed over in silence,' he adds, 'I confess to your Lordship it would have given me some uneasiness, and to your Lordship, I am sure, no satisfaction. I would not wish to have the credit of having overreached Mr. Fox, or of having surprised any man, nor should I have expected—I am sure I should not have received—your Lordship's thanks for dealing in this manner even with your enemy, but the transaction was all fair and above-board. What Mr. Fox has done was with his eyes open. . . . I shall be

the main object for which these changes were made appeared to have failed, for it was quite certain that the English Government would not compensate Jenkinson or Fox out of English revenues. At Harcourt's earnest request, the office was kept open, and North wrote expressing his strong hope that Flood would accept it; but he added, 'he certainly could not expect us to turn out a Vice-Treasurer to make room for him. He must have foreseen that no equivalent could be granted to any of the existing Vice-Treasurers without the creation of a new pension, and he probably knew that his Majesty, even if he were inclined to burthen the British revenue for the sake of this Irish arrangement, could not have done it to any good purpose, as he has no fund except in Ireland which he can charge for lives or years with a pension sufficient for accomplishing the point in view.' The proposed arrangement appeared to North very reasonable, 'especially as there have been lately extinct upon the Irish establishment more annuities than enough to reimburse Mr. Fox's pension.'[1]

After a delay of about three months, Flood consented to accept the office of Vice-Treasurer on the terms of the Government. The letter to Harcourt in which he announced his intention has been fortunately preserved. He urgently exculpates himself from the charge of having caused the Vice-Treasurership to be vacated, and Fox's pension to be granted. These steps, he said, had been taken after he had written to Harcourt that he must not be considered pledged to take office, and after he had expressly informed Jenkinson that he would

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careful, however, to keep the thing secret as you so properly direct. It certainly should not stir from these corners, though it will be very curious to see the event.' See also *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 333–340. Considering that Fox was at this time in violent political opposition to North, this whole episode is very curious.

[1] North to Blaquiere, Sept. 19, 1775.

not accept the Vice-Treasurership. The Lord Lieutenant, however, was in a very embarrassing position in consequence of the vacancy that had been created, and he himself was anxious to lighten the burden to the country. Under these circumstances, Flood had declared himself willing to take the office, but only on the condition that the additional burden of Fox's pension should not be imposed on the Irish revenue. In a subsequent conversation,' he continues, 'Mr. Jenkinson stated that by a retrenchment of 1,000*l.* a year, viz. the additional salary of the Alnager, Mr. Fox's pension would be counterbalanced all but 700*l.* a year; and that by your raising of the Absentee Tax the net burden of the whole pension would be but about 350*l.* To this state of the matter, the restoration to the kingdom of a great office with a considerable salary was to be added, which in one light was a point of decorum and dignity to the country, and in another was a point of pecuniary advantage and national saving.' On these grounds Flood thought it right to accept the office. At the same time, he begged Harcourt not to break off any negotiation North might have entered into for a different disposal of it.[1]

Harcourt concluded the negotiation with much alacrity, but also with considerable irritation. 'Since I was born,' he wrote to North, 'I never had to deal with so difficult a man, owing principally to his high-strained ideas of his own great importance and popularity. But the acquisition of such a man, however desirable at other times, may prove more than ordinarily valuable in the difficult times we may live to see, and which may afford him a very ample field for the display of his great abilities.'[1]

I have related this episode at considerable length, for it vitally affects the reputation of a man who, though

[1] This letter will be found in Warden Flood's *Life of Henry Flood*, pp. 106–108.

[2] Harcourt to North, Oct. 9, 1775.

now sinking rapidly into forgetfulness, played in his day a great part in Irish constitutional history, and commanded the warm admiration and respect of some of the best of his contemporaries. It is evident that the Vice-roy considered him pretentious and impracticable, and attributed to him that common fault of politicians, a desire to increase his importance by rendering himself troublesome and formidable to those in office. It is, I think, equally evident that there was nothing in the antecedents or professions of Flood that made it improper or dishonourable for him to desire office, and that by bringing back to Ireland the dignity and emolument of Vice-Treasurer, which had hitherto been reserved for English politicians, he was rendering a real service to his country. Nor does it appear to me that there was anything either unusual or very reprehensible in the determination of a first-class politician to accept only an important office. If Irish politics had gone on in their accustomed grooves, or if Flood had resigned his office when they assumed a new aspect, the appointment would probably have excited no blame. But the American war, with its long train of Irish consequences, speedily broke out. Flood had wished, as early as 1776, to transfer his talents from Ireland to the English Parliament, where he was prepared to support the policy of North, but his overtures for a seat were unsuccessful.[1] He remained in Ireland; for seven years he was silent in office, while the questions which he had first brought forward were rising rapidly to the front, and when at last he broke loose from the Government, he found that his place was filled and that he was no longer trusted and followed as of old. In the very session in which he accepted office, his great rival Grattan took his seat in the Irish Parliament.

[1] North to Harcourt, March 28, 1776.

A few slight commercial concessions were in the same session granted by England. The Newfoundland and some other fisheries, from which Irish fishermen had hitherto been excluded, were thrown open to them. The prohibition of the exportation of woollen manufactures was so far relaxed that the Irish were permitted to furnish the clothing of their own troops when they were stationed out of Ireland. The importation of rape-seed into Great Britain was, under certain regulations, permitted, and a small bounty was granted by Great Britain upon the importation of flax into Ireland.[1]

The last measure was due to a rapid decline in the linen trade which had begun to threaten very serious consequences to the nation. As we have already seen, it had been at the time of the Revolution the policy of England to extirpate the woollen manufacture which was the staple industry of Ireland, and to encourage as a compensation the linen and hempen manufactures, which were then exceedingly insignificant, but which, it was supposed, could not interfere with English industries. As we have also seen, the promise which was held out of a steady encouragement of these manufactures was not fulfilled.[2] The manufacture in Ireland of the finer kinds of linen was not only not encouraged, but was crushed by severe disabling laws. The manufacture of Irish sailcloth was abandoned in consequence of the hostile legislation of the English Parliament, and the promised encouragement was confined to the simplest and coarsest kinds of Irish linen, which were admitted to the colonial market, and which, for the twenty-nine years preceding 1774, had even received English bounties upon export, averaging somewhat less than 10,000*l.* a year.

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[1] Commons' *Journals*, xvii. 10; Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 576, 577.

[2] Vol. i. p. 178.

By these bounties, by a steady application to this single manufacture for the space of seventy years, and by premiums granted by the Irish Parliament, which amounted during that period to not less than 500,000*l.*, the Irish linen manufacture, within the narrow limits that were assigned to it, had attained a considerable prosperity, and it continued to increase till 1771, when an alarming decadence began which continued with accelerated rapidity during the next two years. Many causes were assigned for it, one of the principal being the interruption of commerce due to the rising troubles in America. Robert Stephenson, who was inspector of the linen manufacture in Ireland, being examined before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1774, stated that more than one-third of the weavers through the whole kingdom were unemployed, that in the county Longford where twenty years before 2,000 looms were at work, there were at present less than 20, that not less than 10,000 Irish weavers had within the last two or three years emigrated to America, and that great numbers of others had turned day labourers or were sunk in the deepest distress.[1]

Events which were destined to exercise an extraordinary influence over Irish politics were now rapidly hastening on. The American dissensions had all but reached their climax, and there were great numbers in Ireland who regarded the American cause as their own. Already the many disastrous circumstances of Irish history had driven great bodies of Irishmen to seek a home in the more distant dominions of the Crown. The island of Monserrat is said to have been entirely occupied by planters of Irish origin; at least a third of the planters of Jamaica were either Irish or of Irish origin;[2] and

[1] See the report of the Committee of the House of Commons.—Commons' *Journals*, xvi. 387–418. Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 546.

[2] Ibid. iii. 647.

great districts of the American colonies were almost wholly planted by settlers from Ulster. But this was by no means the only interest which Ireland had in the colonial struggle. Never before had the question of the relations of the mother-country to its dependencies been brought before the world with such a distinctness of emphasis and of definition. The Irish party which followed the traditions of Swift and Molyneux had always contended that, by the ancient constitution of their country, Ireland was inseparably connected with the English Crown, but was not dependent upon, or subject to, the English Parliament. By Poynings' Law a great part of the independence of the Irish Parliament had indeed been surrendered; but even the servile Parliament which passed it, though extending by its own authority to Ireland laws previously enacted in England, never admitted the right of the English Parliament to make laws for Ireland. English lawyers had sometimes asserted and sometimes denied the existence of such a right, but the first explicit text in its favour was the Declaratory Act of George I. by which the English Parliament asserted its own right of legislating for Ireland.[1]

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[1] Bacon and Sir Richard Bolton both affirmed that no English Acts were in force in Ireland unless they had been confirmed by the Irish Parliament. An English judgment under Richard III. expressly asserts, 'Hibernia habet parliamenta et faciunt leges et nostra statuta non ligant eos, quia non mittunt milites ad parliamentum,' and Charles I., in his answer to the Catholic delegates in 1643, admitted that the sole right of the Irish Parliament to legislate for Ireland had been uniformly recognised ever since the conquest under Henry II. (Carte's *Ormond*, i. 409). On the other hand, there were long periods during which no parliaments were sitting in Ireland, and many instances in which the English Parliaments did actually legislate for Ireland, and an English judgment as early as Henry VII. asserts the right. Usually, however, if not always, the Irish Parliament re-enacted or confirmed those laws. Camden and Sir John Davies both maintained that in the earliest period of the English occupation of

It was precisely parallel to the Declaratory Act relating to America which was passed when the Stamp Act was repealed. In both cases the right was denied, but in both cases the great majority of politicians were practically ready to acquiesce, provided certain restrictions and limitations were secured to them. The Americans did not dispute the power of the English Legislature to bind their commerce and regulate their affairs as members of an extended empire, as long as they were untrammelled in their local concerns and were not taxed except by their own representatives. The position of most Irish politicians was very similar. The Irish Parliament legislated for the local concerns of Ireland, and it still retained with great jealousy a certain control over the purse, which it justly looked upon as incomparably the most important of its prerogatives.

This control was, it is true, much less complete than that which was possessed in England by the English Parliament. The great changes affecting the revenue which had been made in England at the Revolution of 1688 had not extended to Ireland. The hereditary revenue was beyond the control of Parliament, but the other portions of the Irish revenue could not be levied without a parliamentary vote, and the hereditary revenue was not sufficient for the government of the country. Nearly every important concession which had been won had been granted in order to induce the Irish Parliament to raise additional supplies, and the extraordinary efforts

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Ireland the English Parliament legislated for Ireland, and Coke strenuously maintained that it could lawfully bind Ireland by its Acts. After the Restoration this appears to have been the general doctrine among English lawyers. Two great fires (in A.D. 1300 and in 1711) destroyed a large part of the early Irish records, and greatly added to the perplexity of the subject. See the very learned essay of Monck Mason *On the Antiquity and Constitution of Parliaments in Ireland* (Dublin, 1820). Ball's *Irish Legislative Systems*.

and sacrifices the executive was prepared to make to secure this end sufficiently showed that in the eyes of English statesmen the power rested with the Irish Parliament alone. The importance which both sides attached to the question of supply was manifested on the one hand by the tenacity with which the Privy Council clung to its very useless prerogative of originating or altering Money Bills, and on the other hand by the determination with which the most submissive Parliaments rejected the Money Bills which had been thus originated or amended. Sometimes the majority were perfectly prepared to acquiesce in the substance of the amendments of the Privy Council; but in that case the principle was formally asserted by rejecting the altered Bill, and it was then introduced afresh as a new Bill and with a new title.

There was, as we have seen, one important difference relating to taxation between Ireland and the colonies, which was all to the advantage of the former. Ireland possessed a Parliament which was capable of taxing the whole country, and which had very recently levied taxes for imperial purposes much beyond the power of the nation to support. In America no taxes for imperial purposes were raised, and it was only possible to raise them by the concurrence of a great number of provincial legislatures.

This, however, affected only the question of expediency, but not the question of right. It was plain to demonstration that if the English Parliament could establish its right to tax the colonies without their consent, it must possess a similar power in Ireland. If it be true, as was asserted by the Government, that a power to legislate for a country necessarily implies a power to tax it; if it be true that there is no distinction in principle between a law of commercial regulation and a law levying a direct tax; if it be true that in the constitu-

tion of the British Empire there is no natural and necessary connection between representation and taxation, Ireland could not possibly resist the conclusion. The English Parliament had asserted in the most unqualified terms its right to legislate for Ireland, and it had exercised that right by regulating every portion of Irish commerce. The defeat of America would at once establish the principle that Ireland might be taxed by an assembly sitting in London, and, if this were done, every power of constitutional resistance, every vestige of constitutional liberty, would be destroyed. The spirit of prerogative in England was rising higher and higher, and if it were flushed by a great triumph in the colonies, it was difficult to assign limits to its progress. It was the deliberate opinion of some of the wisest English statesmen, that the defeat of America would be followed by the destruction of English freedom. It was much more certain that it would establish a principle and a precedent that would be fatal to the liberties of the dependencies.

The impossibility of leaving the question in its former undecided condition was widely felt. The 'Commentaries on the Laws of England' were published in 1765, and had already attained an extraordinary reputation, and in this great work Blackstone had asserted, without any qualification or restriction, the right of the British Parliament to bind Ireland by its laws.[1] Rigby, and some other members of the English House of Commons, had maintained in express terms the right of the British Parliament to tax Ireland without her consent,[2] and a large section of the English Opposition countenanced the doctrine by their silence. The Rockingham party refused to join Chatham in denying the

[1] Introduction, sec. 4.

[2] *Annual Register*, 1775, p. 109; Walpole's *Last Journals*, i. 355, 359–361

right of England to tax America, though they were ready to concur in its inexpediency. They had themselves carried the declaratory law relating to America. They accepted the doctrine that a power of legislating includes a power of taxing, and Rockingham, at least, was of opinion that England, by virtue of the Declaratory Act of George I., had a full right to tax Ireland, though it would not be expedient for her to exercise it.[1] On the other hand, the conviction was rapidly growing among the colonists that they could only secure themselves from being taxed by the British Parliament by denying altogether its authority in America; the treatise of Molyneux in defence of Irish liberty was becoming the text-book of American freedom, and Franklin was exerting all his powers to prove that, though America was undoubtedly subject to the English king, it owed no allegiance to the British Parliament.

These considerations are sufficient to show how directly and vitally the Irish were interested in the contest that was waging in America. The independent and patriotic party was still small, but it was daily strengthening throughout the country in numbers and in courage.

As early as 1765, Charlemont and some other peers had protested against the Act restraining the export of corn, 'because, although the crowns of England and Ireland be united, yet Ireland is a distinct kingdom, and, as such, has a distinct and separate executive, as well as a distinct and separate legislature. But the proper and distinct executive of this kingdom is his Majesty, as king of Ireland, or his substitute, or substitutes, with the Privy Council of Ireland.'[2] From the

[1] Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 254, 255.
[2] Hardy, i. 222.

beginning of the discussion on the Stamp Act, Charlemont and several other Irish politicians had been watching it eagerly in the interests of Ireland.[1] In 1771 Benjamin Franklin visited Dublin, and he has thrown a casual but vivid ray of light upon Irish affairs. Having visited the leading patriots in the Irish Parliament, 'I found them,' he says, 'disposed to be friends of America, in which I endeavoured to confirm them with the expectation that our growing weight might in time be thrown into their scale, and by joining our interests with theirs, a more equitable treatment from this nation [England] might be obtained for themselves as well as for us.' 'There are many brave spirits among them,' he continued. 'The gentry are a very sensible, polite, and friendly people. Their Parliament makes a most respectable figure, with a number of very good speakers in both parties and able men of business. And I must not omit acquainting you that, it being a standing rule to admit members of the English Parliament to sit (though they do not vote) in the House among the members, while others are only admitted into the gallery, my fellow traveller, being an English member, was accordingly admitted as such. But I supposed I must go to the gallery, when the Speaker stood up and acquainted the House that he understood there was in town an American gentleman of (as he was pleased to say) distinguished character and merit,' and he asked that Franklin should be admitted to sit among them, which was unanimously granted. Franklin ever after retained a feeling of friendship for Ireland, and he desired that she should be, if possible, excluded from the non-importation agreement.[2]

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xvi. 96.

[2] Franklin's *Works*, vii. 557, 558. June 30, 1774, he wrote to his son: 'I should be sorry if Ireland is included in your agreement, because that country is much our friend, and the want of flax-seed may distress them

In 1775 the Americans issued a special address to the Irish, urging the identity of their interests; and in the same year Chatham asserted that Ireland on the colonial question was with America 'to a man.'[1] The Presbyterians of the North were fiercely American, and few classes were so largely represented in the American army as Irish emigrants.

In Parliament, however, this feeling was only very feebly represented. The opposition which had grown up under Lord Townshend had almost wholly melted away. Harcourt had succeeded in attaching to his Government nearly every man who possessed considerable parliamentary influence, and the old traditional feeling, which had always led the Irish Parliament and the Irish gentry in times of danger to subordinate every other consideration to the support of the mother country, was still alive. Blaquiere, indeed, warned the Home Government that no more money could be raised in Ireland by taxation, though, by improving the regulation of the revenue, it might be made more productive, but at the same time he declared in the most emphatic terms that the Irish Parliament was ready to make any sacrifice for England.[2] In the summer of 1775 recruiting was very active in Ireland. Circular letters were sent to the principal noblemen; Lord Shannon and

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exceedingly. . . . It can only be meant against England, to ensure a change of measures, and not to hurt Ireland, with whom we have no quarrel.'—Albemarle's *Life of Rockingham*, ii. 300.

[1] Thackeray's *Life of Chatham*, ii. 286.

[2] 'You may ask the people for taxes, and they will give them. Impressed with a just sense of your attention to this kingdom, I think there are few things you can ask and which you will not find them disposed to give you, but it would be all in vain, the country is unable to pay them. Much may be done by regulation—little, I fear, by taxation.'—Blaquiere to North, Sept. 27, 1775. 'The Irish give you themselves—their all—and they would give your their money if God had granted them any to give.'—Ibid. Dec. 13, 1775.

Lord Bellamont subscribed additional bounties for recruits; Lord Kenmare and the other principal Catholic gentry took the same course, and the Catholics of Limerick came in such numbers to take the oath of allegiance before the Mayor and Sheriff that the ceremony of swearing them in could not be completed in one day.[1] Rochford wrote to Harcourt urging him to leave no effort untried. '2,000 or 3,000 men,' he said, 'are essentially requisite to be sent with the utmost expedition to America. Every means must be used, every effort made to add a very considerable and effectual body of troops early next spring to the army in America. . . . It is not judged practicable at the present moment to spare any troops out of this kingdom, there being only nine battalions of foot besides the Guards now in it; nor is there time to draw any this year from Minorca and Gibraltar, so that Ireland alone can supply what is now so necessary towards resisting the unnatural and open rebellion which exists in so important a part of his Majesty's dominions.' 'The English ministers,' he adds, 'trust the Irish will exert their well-known and affectionate zeal and spirit in supporting his Majesty's Government in an exigency of such particular importance, in which all other considerations, of how much weight soever they are in themselves, and which have been at other times strictly attended to, must and ought to yield to the actual unavoidable necessity,' and he maintained that five regiments must be

[1] Harcourt to Rochford, Sept. 1, 30, 1775. Harcourt says Lord Shannon's bounty 'will have a very good effect, not only in accelerating the recruiting service, but in preventing the effects of any clamours that might prevail if none but the Roman Catholics had shown a zeal and readiness to forward the service at this juncture.' See, too, the *Correspondence of George III. with Lord North*, p. 268, and Lord Bellamont to Blaquiere, Aug. 15, 1775.

taken from Ireland before the deficiency can be supplied.[1]

Under these circumstances the Irish Parliament met in October 1775, and Harcourt, in his speech from the throne, noticed the rebellion existing in America, and called upon the Irish Parliament to assist in its suppression. An address was at once drawn up in reply expressing the 'abhorrence' and 'indignation' with which the Parliament heard of the disturbances in America, and pledging themselves to show their 'most devoted and inviolable attachment to his Majesty's sacred person and Government in the assertion of his just rights, and in the support of his legal authority.' Usually such addresses passed unopposed, but on this occasion a most earnest and persistent opposition was made. 'The debate,' Harcourt wrote, 'was conducted with great violence on the part of the Opposition.' An amendment strongly urging the necessity of 'conciliatory and healing measures for the removal of the discontent which prevails in the colonies,' was defeated by 92 to 52, and an amendment expunging the words which stigmatised the conduct of the Americans by 90 to 54, and the original address was carried.[2]

The Opposition included Ponsonby, the connections of the Duke of Leinster, and some county members; and Langrishe, who had already written ably for the Americans, and Yelverton, who was afterwards one of the most faithful colleagues of Grattan, were prominent on the same side. Grattan himself did not enter the House till three months later. The abstention of more than half the members of the House of Commons on a question so vitally important is remarkable, and it was

[1] Rochford to Harcourt, Aug. 1, 1775.

[2] Commons' *Journals*, xvii. 14, 15. Harcourt to Rochford, Oct. 11, 1775.

probably in some degree due to the American sympathies of many members who owed their seats to great borough-owners now in alliance with the Government, and who were, therefore, according to the received code of parliamentary honour, precluded from voting against the Ministers. Harcourt was under no illusion about the strength of the American feeling in Ireland, and he had forced on the question at the earliest possible moment. 'I saw the moment approaching,' he wrote, 'when this important question would have been pressed upon me by the Opposition to the King's Government in this country, who were daily gaining strength upon this ground, with such advantages that I should have had great difficulty in resisting it. . . . The Presbyterians in the North (who in their hearts are Americans) were gaining strength every day.' Letters had been written from England urging Ireland 'to take an adverse part in the contest.' 'I have never,' he concluded, 'passed moments so happy as those have been since the question was determined.'[1]

The triumph was indeed a great one, and the majority of the Government was overwhelming. A new resolution directed against the Dyson pension was defeated by 94 to 70. A resolution asserting, what appears to have been perfectly true, that so many men had been drafted from Ireland that the promised 12,000 soldiers were even now not to be found in the kingdom, was, after much discussion, withdrawn. 'Mr. Flood, I am told,' wrote the Viceroy, 'spoke most eloquently, and his performance was allowed to be very great and able. He seems to be very cordial, and will, I make no doubt, prove a very important acquisition to his Majesty's service.' Without a single dissentient vote, generals who had regiments in Ireland were exempted,

[1] Harcourt to Rochford, Oct. 11, 1775.

when on duty out of Ireland, from the tax of 4*s.* in the 1*l.* imposed on absentee placeholders, and finally, in accordance with an urgent message from Harcourt, the House agreed, in consideration of the great dangers that menaced the Empire, to permit 4,000 of the troops who were appointed by statute to remain in Ireland for its defence to be withdrawn from the kingdom. In order to induce the House to take this step, the Government promised that during their absence from Ireland they should be paid from the Imperial treasury, and it was hoped that the measure would, in consequence, relieve the grave financial embarrassments at home. The Government offered to replace the troops that were withdrawn, as soon as possible, by foreign Protestants, without any expense to Ireland, but the offer was thankfully declined.[1]

In this manner, to the bitter indignation of a small group of independent members and in defiance of a strong Protestant opinion in the country, Ireland was committed to the American struggle. 103 members supported, and 58 opposed the Government. 'The sparing these troops,' Harcourt truly wrote, would be 'a convincing proof to America and to the whole world of the decisive part Ireland takes in the quarrel.'[2] Yelverton appears to have been the most conspicuous opponent of the measure. Flood, on the other hand, defended it in a speech in which he described the troops as 'armed negotiators,' a phrase which was not forgotten or forgiven. In the North the discontent was general, and Harcourt sent a report to the Government complaining bitterly of 'the violent opposition made by the Presbyterians to the measures of Government,' and

[1] Harcourt to Rochford, Nov. 15, 18, 26. Commons' *Journals*, xvii, 203, 207, 210.

[2] Harcourt to North, Nov. 26, 1775,

describing them as 'talking in all companies in such a way that if they are not rebels, it is hard to find a name for them.'[1]

The attitude of the Catholics, however, was very encouraging. In September a number of the leading members of that body presented an address expressing their 'abhorrence of the unnatural rebellion which has lately broken out among some of his Majesty's American subjects.' 'We humbly presume to lay at his feet,' they continued, 'two millions of loyal, faithful, and affectionate hearts and hands, unarmed indeed, but zealous, ready, and desirous to exert themselves strenuously in defence of his Majesty's most sacred person and Government.' They described the loyalty of the Irish Catholics as 'unanimous, constant, and unalterable,' 'a loyalty which we may justly say is and always was as the dial to the sun, true, though not shone upon.' These sentiments, they said, they well knew 'to be those of all their fellow Roman Catholic Irish subjects.'[2]

In Parliament several circumstances conspired to increase the discontent. New duties were voted in order to provide funds for transporting the 4,000 troops to America, and the English Privy Council thought fit to alter two Money Bills, which were accordingly very angrily, and almost unanimously rejected, though they appear to have been reintroduced and passed in their altered form. The English Government maintained that after the resolution of the House of Commons they might remove the 4,000 troops by royal prerogative. The Viceroy maintained that an enabling Act of Parliament was necessary, and the question was at last compromised by a declaratory Act recognising the authority

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[1] Harcourt to Rochford, Aug. 16, 1775. See, too, on the American sympathies of the Irish Protestants, *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, iv. 339. *Harcourt Papers*, ix. 357, 358.

of the addresses of the Houses of Parliament. A Bill making the tenure of judges secure was again carried through the House of Commons, and was strongly supported by the Irish Privy Council, but the English Privy Council, acting upon the advice of Harcourt, whose settled policy was to maintain every form of Government influence, again refused to return it. A new Militia Bill was sent over, but, though recommended by Harcourt, it was not returned. The financial condition of the country, in spite of the new taxes, continued scandalously bad. The National Debt on Lady Day 1775 was more than 976,000*l.* The pensions for the two previous years were 164,137*l.* 175,000*l.* more was raised by annuities. A powerful representation to the Lord Lieutenant was moved in the House of Commons,[1] and, although it was not carried, the signs of irritation were so strong that in March 1776 the Ministers determined to dissolve Parliament. Harcourt urged that in the present state of affairs it would be exceedingly advisable to dispense with the custom of sending over a Money Bill as a reason for summoning the new Parliament, but the answer was curt and decisive. The King himself had declared that 'he could not depart from the constitutional usage.'[2]

Blaquiere looked forward with considerable apprehension to the coming dissolution. The majority of the seats were, it is true, in the uncontrolled possession of a few individuals who were in alliance with the Government, but there were always some constituencies which were truly representative, and in a very confidential letter to Robinson, the English Secretary of the Treasury, Blaquiere predicted that, unless the greatest

[1] Plowden's *Historical Review*, i. 437–441.

[2] Harcourt to Weymouth, Dec. 22, 28, 1775. Weymouth to Harcourt, Jan. 22, 1776. Harcourt to Weymouth Feb. 5, 28; March 20, 1776. Weymouth to Harcourt, March 26, 1776. Plowden, i. 434–439. Commons' *Journals*, xvii. 15 & 16 Geo. III. c. 10.

care was taken, the Government would lose seriously at the election. 'The means to remedy the evil,' he continued, 'are but few, and after the conversation we have had upon this score, in which there appeared almost an impossibility of affording us any assistance from England, I shall suppose but one. You must by pension or place sink a sum of not less than about 9,000*l.* per annum, exclusive of the provision that may be found requisite for rewarding and indemnifying those who are connected by office with his Excellency's administration. . . . There are not less than thirty or forty members who, if not assisted, certainly cannot secure their re-elections. Many of these gentlemen hold small employments and pensions from 200*l.* to 300*l.*, some under 200*l.* a year. Their seats in the new Parliament cannot be purchased at less than 2,000 guineas to 2,500*l.* Their past services certainly entitle them to the possession of what they now hold, and an addition by salary from 200*l.* to 250*l.* or more, as circumstances require, must surely be considered as scarcely an adequate compensation for the advance and loss of so large a sum as 2,000 guineas. There are, besides, several gentlemen who, holding not a shilling under the Crown, have assisted, and are now engaged to support, the measures of Government upon expectation given them of a suitable provision at the end of this session.'[1] Shortly after, Blaquiere sent Robinson a detailed list of the pensions required to secure the election. They amounted to 11,250*l.*, but of this sum 1,400*l.* was still due from Lord Townshend's pledges. 'These things done,' he said, 'you will have most unquestionably in the new Parliament a most respectable majority.' '138 plumping votes, of unequivocal men, is, in my opinion, as great a power as Government can now command or ever

[1] Blaquiere to Robinson, Nov. 2, 1775.

need to command in this Parliament.'[1] But in addition to the grant of these pensions a step was taken which in England would probably have been followed by an impeachment. The simultaneous creation of twelve peers in order to secure a majority was justly regarded as one of the worst acts of the Tory Ministry of Anne, but it was now far surpassed. Eighteen Irish peers were created in a single day, and seven barons and five viscounts were at the same time raised a step in the peerage. The terms of the bargain were well known to be an engagement to support the Government by their votes in the House of Lords, by their substitutes and their influence in the House of Commons.[2]

This was one of the last events in the administration of Lord Harcourt. His relations with the English ministers had for some time been growing tense, and he now resigned office and was replaced in November 1776 by the Earl of Buckinghamshire. The administration of Harcourt in its opening had enjoyed great popularity, but it carried the system of corruption which Townshend had established to a still greater excess. Though large economies in the establishments had been promised, though the deficiency in most branches of the revenue was already threatening bankruptcy, yet no less than 80,000*l.* had been added in this administration to the public expenditure of Ireland.[3] Several thousands of pounds were spent in creating new offices or annexing new salaries to old ones, and in the words of Grattan, 'there was scarcely a sinecure whose salary Government had not increased.' In the space of twenty years the Civil List had nearly doubled, the Pension List had nearly doubled, and a national debt of a million had

[1] Blaquiere to Robinson, Dec. 15, 1775 (private and confidential).

[2] Plowden, i. 445. Four baronets were also made about the same time. See, too, Walpole's *Last Journals*, ii. 58, 59.

[3] Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 4.

been accumulated.[1] Between March 1773 and September 1777 the Pension List had risen from 79,099*l.* to 89,095*l.*[2] Loans were raised in 1769, in 1771, in 1773, in 1775, and in 1777. In 1773 and 1775 new taxes were imposed which were estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year, yet these measures and the withdrawal of a large body of troops from the establishment had failed to restore the equilibrium.[3] It was no longer possible to urge that the public revenue was largely wasted in private grants for stimulating private enterprises. Most of the new expenses emanated from the Government itself. Nearly half the debt had been accumulated in time of perfect peace, and candid men were obliged to confess that the old system of Undertakers was much more economical, and was certainly not more corrupt, than that which had succeeded it.

It seemed, indeed, scarcely possible that the country could escape bankruptcy, for, while the establishments were steadily mounting, the few sources of wealth which the commercial restrictions had left were now cut off. The rupture with the colonies closed one of the chief markets of Irish linens, while the provision trade, on which the landed interest mainly depended, was annihilated by an embargo which was laid by proclamation, and without consultation with the Irish Parliament, on the export of provisions from Ireland, and which was continued during three years. It was ostensibly to prevent Irish provisions passing to the colonists or to the

[1] At Lady Day, 1777, the National Debt was 834,086*l.* 19*s.* 3*d.* But in this session 166,000*l.* more was added. Besides this, the nation was burdened with life annuities at 6 per cent. for the sum of 444,000*l.* See the remarkable representation of the minority in Parliament, Commons' *Journals*, xviii. 337–340.

[2] Ibid. xviii. 368.

[3] See the report of the minority in the House of Commons in Plowden's *Historical Register*, i. 450–454. Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 2–19.

French, but it was very positively stated that it was imposed by an unconstitutional stretch of the prerogative at the instigation of private individuals, in order to favour a few private contractors in England. The rupture with France was in no part of the Empire felt so severely as in Ireland; for one of the effects of the laws restraining Irish commerce with England and her colonies had been to establish a close commercial connection between Ireland and France. It was said by a very able writer on the economical condition of Ireland, that 'two of her provinces may at this very day be called provinces of France as much as of Great Britain.'[1] All this commercial intercourse was now cut off. French and American privateers swarmed around the coast, and universal distress set in. The price of black cattle, and of wool; rents, credit, private business and public revenue in all their branches rapidly sank, and thousands of manufacturers lived on charity or abandoned the country. In Dublin, half-starving crowds, carrying a black fleece in token of their distress, paraded the streets. The pressure was so severe that in 1778 Ireland was obliged to borrow from England 50,000*l.* for the payment of her troops, and the value of the imports from England was 634,444*l.* below the average of the four preceding years.[2] The want of employment, complained one of the best economical writers in Ireland, was at this time such that two-thirds of the country was uninhabited. At least 15,000 Irishmen were seeking their living in foreign armies; and, perhaps, a still greater number in other capacities on the Continent. At every opportunity great numbers were flying across the sea, and as the same extension of pasture which diminished

[1] *Comparative View of the Public Burdens of Great Britain and Ireland* (London and Dublin, 1779), p. 53.

[2] Walter H. Burgh on *The State of Ireland* (June 1779).—Record Office. Crawford's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 331, 332.

the demand for labour raised the price of bread, over a great part of Ireland, 'the wretches that remained had scarcely the appearance of human creatures.' 'In England,' he concluded, 'there is no such thing as poverty in comparison of what is to be found in every part of Ireland except the cities and principal towns.' [1]

The necessity under these circumstances of abandoning the system of commercial restrictions began to force itself upon many minds. It was plain that without some alteration in her economical condition Ireland could not much longer contribute her share to the military expenditure of the Empire. It was plain that a large part of the discontent which was rapidly severing the American colonies from the Empire had been due to the commercial policy of the mother country, and it was only too probable that in Ireland similar causes would ultimately produce similar effects. The disaster of Saratoga, in 1777, had revealed the full gravity of the situation, and, now that the sword of France was thrown into the hostile scale, the issue of the contest was at least very doubtful. Besides this, the wisdom of the code was becoming widely questioned. From a very early time a few weighty voices had broken the unanimity in its favour. Even Davenant, who so strongly supported its most oppressive provisions, had contended that the free admission of Irish cattle would be advantageous to England. Decker, in his remarkable essay 'On the Causes of the Decline of Foreign Trade,' had advocated a legislative union and a complete abolition of trade restrictions between England and Ireland, and had pointed out how the English, by prohibiting the importation of cattle from Ireland and of corn from any country, except when its price was immoderate, had

[1] Caldwell's *Inquiry into the Restrictions on the Trade of Ireland* (Dublin, 1779), pp. 26, 27.

hampered their own manufactures, while the Dutch, by allowing their workmen to obtain provisions in the cheapest markets, were able to produce their goods at prices with which it was impossible for Englishmen to compete. Sir Francis Brewster was somewhat less liberal in his commercial views; but he too advocated a legislative union, and argued that England, in making laws for the purpose of crippling Irish industry, acted like a man who cut off a limb from his own body. Berkeley questioned the whole mercantile theory on which the restrictive code was based. Hume not only demonstrated the falseness of that theory, but argued strongly in favour of the reciprocal advantages of free trade of the widest kind. Shelburne was an early and consistent advocate of free trade. 'Monopolies,' he once said, 'some way or other, are ever justly punished. They forbid rivalry, and rivalry is of the very essence of the well-being of trade. This seems to be the era of Protestantism in trade.' He at the same time reminded English politicians that their present policy of commercial restriction was a very modern one, dating only from the Restoration, and in its worst features from the Revolution. It would be, perhaps, rash to suppose that the 'Wealth of Nations' had yet attained any considerable influence even among the highest minds, but like all books which mark an epoch in the human intellect, the treatise of Adam Smith was in a great measure representative, systematising, defending, elaborating, and harmonising modes of political thinking which had long been gathering strength in the community.

Two or three Irish writers of conspicuous ability about this time advocated the cause of their country with great force of reasoning, and with a singular conformity to the principles of sound political economy.[1]

[1] In 1779 two productions of almost the highest economical merit were published: *The Inquiry concerning the Restrictions*

They urged that Ireland could only be reasonably regarded as a remote part of the British Empire, and that there could be no greater absurdity than to suppose that laws which enfeeble, depopulate, and depress one-third of the Empire can render the aggregate strong, populous, and flourishing. They maintained that in exact proportion to the growing wealth of Ireland would be not only her capacity of serving England, but also the inevitable outflow of her wealth to England; that the present cheapness of labour in Ireland which was so terrible to English manufacturers was merely a consequence of the want of employment, and would cease with growing wealth and manufactures; that every argument which was urged in favour of crippling Irish trade might be equally urged in favour of crippling the trade in one part of England for the advantage of another. London might petition that the port of Bristol should be closed because it was better situated for the Irish trade. The rest of England might combine to exclude Yorkshire from the wool trade, because Yorkshire carried it on with exceptional success. Could it be reasonably doubted that if England were divided into two kingdoms, north and south of the Thames, and if

on the Trade of Ireland, by Sir James Caldwell (the greater part of which was afterwards reprinted in Almon's *Biographical Anecdotes*), and Hely Hutchinson's *Commercial Restraints*. See, too, a valuable anonymous pamphlet called *A Comparative View of the Public Burdens of Great Britain and Ireland*. In 1779 the Government solicited from most of the leading politicians in Ireland a detailed account of their view of the economical evils of Ireland and of the best methods of remedying them. The result was a series of papers on the condition of Ireland by Lord Lifford, Hely Hutchinson, Henry Burgh, Pery, Foster, and a few others, which are preserved at the Record Office and which are well worthy of publication. It is impossible to read them without being struck with their great ability and also with the curiously significant fact that no one of the writers (as far as I have observed) mentions the penal laws against the Catholics as one of the causes of economical depression.

each carried on a war of commercial prohibitions and high duties against the other, the whole community would be weakened; and was not the case parallel with respect to the two parts of the British dominions that lie on opposite sides of the Irish Channel? Could it be doubted that if the area of England were doubled, if the whole were fully peopled, and if the people were fully employed, the strength of the Empire would be proportionately increased; and was it not plain that England would obtain many of the advantages of increase of territory by raising Ireland through equal commercial laws to a level with herself? The essential fallacy of the notion that commerce between two nations is only advantageous to the one which obtains a balance of money was never more clearly displayed, and it was shown by conclusive evidence that the commercial policy was condemned by experience. At the time of the Union with Scotland, English manufacturers predicted that free trade granted to a country where labour was so cheap would prove fatal to English commerce. Scotland had, indeed, gained much by the Union, but the external commerce of England had at least doubled since it was passed. The destruction of the Irish woollen manufacture had, no doubt, ruined Ireland; but it had at the same time given a new vigour to the rival manufactures in France, and even in Spain. Spanish wool was too fine, and French wool too coarse, to be worked up without a mixture of another quality, into cloths fit for general consumption. Irish wool was exactly the mixture that was required. 'Every pack of Irish wool will work up at least two packs of French wool, none of which could be wrought up without it into any stuff that would rival us in the market.' A great clandestine exportation of Irish wool to France had thus inevitably arisen, and it was totally impossible to stop it. Nineteen out of the thirty-two counties of Ireland

touched the sea, and many of the others were traversed by navigable rivers. England had denied Ireland all profitable employment of the wool which was her most valuable product, and it was for the advantage of all classes to encourage this illicit trade. Hely Hutchinson, indeed, in a very able paper addressed to the Government, maintained with great force that, considering the constant drain of money to England, the very existence of Ireland depended upon it. The result was that a woollen manufacture which might have flourished in a subordinate part of the British Empire, was transferred to a foreign and hostile power, which had already driven the English wool trade from the Levant, and was rapidly outstripping it in other fields. The elaborate provisions relating to the sugar trade had been equally unsuccessful. In the interest of the English sugar colonies Ireland had been forbidden to import sugar or molasses from the colonies of other Powers. In the interests of English agents she had been forbidden to import them directly from the English colonies, in order that a commission might be charged on them when they were unshipped and reladen in England. The result was that they were obtained clandestinely from the French plantations, and a close commercial connection was formed with the Power from which England had most to fear.

It was added that there was at least one excuse for the Government which crushed the Irish woollen trade which did not any longer exist, for the woollen trade then occupied a wholly unique position among English industries. There was at that time scarcely any trade with the colonies. The manufactures of silk, of cotton, of hardware, of hats, of paper, as well as numerous other branches of English industry, had not yet arisen.[1] The

[1] *Comparative Burdens of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 45. The writer of this pamphlet says: 'England was then almost

Woolsack on which the Chancellor sits when presiding over the Upper House is said to have been originally intended to typify the supreme importance which in the earlier phases of English history the woollen manufacture occupied in English policy. It was almost the sole considerable form of English industry, and the people saw nothing but ruin before them if it was impaired. The fear, however, that Ireland could eclipse England in trade was then, as now, utterly chimerical. 'That a country in the infancy of improvement, without skill in manufactures, without capital in trade, without coal or inland navigation, without habits of docility or industry, should in a moment run away with trade and manufactures from one in which they have been long and firmly established, with all these advantages to boot, is an assertion that is refuted in the stating it.'[1]

Nor could English statesmen afford to look with indifference on the ruin of Ireland. It was computed that at least 600,000*l.* was annually remitted from Ireland to England for absentees, pensioners, mortgagees, and holders of Government annuities. The value of the exports of Great Britain to Ireland in good years was about two millions, and exceeded the value of her exports to any other country except America, and in every war regiments recruited in Ireland and paid from the Irish treasury formed a considerable part of the English army. Unless some change was speedily made in the commercial system all this must cease. Taxation had reached its limits. 'When a nation has spared out of its annual wealth the utmost it can afford for the public purse, new

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confined to one single species of manufacture—namely, the woollen, the market for which, both foreign and domestic, was twice as extensive as at present. In those times our ladies wore stuffs; now even our very servant-maids are clothed in silks and cottons.'

[1] W. H. Burgh (June 1779), Record Office.

laws may change the objects of taxation, but will not increase the amount of revenue.' 'England,' said a distinguished Irish statesman, 'must now either support this kingdom or allow her the means of supporting herself. Her option is to give in trade or in money. Without one or the other I know not how the expense of government here can be supplied. In the one way, she suffers a country of great extent and fertility to become a burden instead of a benefit. In the other, whatever wealth we may acquire will flow back upon herself.' If nothing is done bankruptcy cannot be averted, and it is probable that as soon as the American war is terminated, thousands will leave a country which is manifestly sinking into ruin.[1]

Such were the views which were put forward by the ablest representatives of Irish opinion. Lord Nugent, who was himself an Irishman, brought the question of the relaxation of the Irish commercial code before the English Parliament in April 1778, and in the debates that ensued he was supported with great knowledge and genius by Edmund Burke. In March, Buckingham[2] declared that an enlargement of trade was absolutely necessary to enable Ireland to bear 'the many drains to which it was annually subject, particularly to Great Britain, and to make provision for the expenses of his Majesty's Government, which of late years have in every branch been increased to a considerable amount.'[3] Lord North cordially adopted this view. It was agreed, indeed, that nothing could be done to remove the re-

[1] W. H. Burgh (June 1779), Record Office. See also the reports of John Foster and of Hely Hutchinson.

[2] Until Temple was created Marquis of Buckingham in 1784, Buckinghamshire always signed himself Buckingham, and this form was generally adopted by his contemporaries. See Wraxall, *Post. Mems.* i. 228.

[3] March 20, 1778. Buckingham to North. Irish State Paper Office.

strictions on wool and the woollen manufacture, which were the most important articles of the Commercial Code; but it was proposed that, with this exception, Ireland might send all her products to the English settlements and plantations, and might receive those of the colonies, with the exception of tobacco, in return, without their being first unladen in England. A small attempt to create a manufacture of glass in Ireland had been speedily crushed by an English law prohibiting the Irish from exporting their glass to any country whatever.[1] It was now proposed to allow them to send it to any country except Great Britain, and it was also proposed to repeal a prohibitory duty which excluded from England cotton yarn made in Ireland, and to admit Irish sail-cloth and cordage free of duty.[2]

These resolutions were thrown into the form of Bills, but at once, and from almost every manufacturing town in England, a fierce storm of opposition arose. Petitions, public meetings, instructions to members were all resorted to, and almost the whole commercial class in England protested against any measure allowing the Irish to participate in the most limited degree in British trade, or even to dispose of their own commodities in foreign markets. 'A foreign invasion,' it was said, 'could scarcely have excited a greater alarm.' A mere abstract of the petitions which were sent up, occupied fourteen pages of very small print. It was said that English agents would be impoverished if they were no longer allowed to charge a $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. commission on sugar sent from the plantations to Ireland when it was unladen and reshipped in England. Lancashire feared that checked and printed linens from Ireland would supersede her products in the colonies, and every trade

[1] 19 George II. c. 12.
[2] *Parl. Hist.* xix. 1100–1126. *Annual Register*, 1778, 173, 186.

which was in the remotest degree connected with the proposed Bills flung itself ardently into opposition. It was not a party question, but a spontaneous ebullition of intense commercial selfishness. It was the same spirit which defeated the commercial clauses of the Treaty of Utrecht, and which afterwards mutilated the Irish propositions of Pitt. It was the same spirit which, in the days of William and Anne, had driven Irish manufacturers by thousands into exile, and which dictated the restrictive laws that prepared the way for the loss of America. Nothing indeed in the history of political imposture is more curious than the success with which, during the Anti-Corn Law agitation, the notion was disseminated that on questions of protection and free trade the manufacturing classes have been peculiarly liberal and enlightened, and the landed classes peculiarly selfish and ignorant. It is indeed true, that when in the present century the pressure of population on subsistence had made a change in the Corn Laws inevitable, the manufacturing classes placed themselves at the head of a free-trade movement from which they must necessarily have derived the chief benefit, while the entire risk and sacrifice were thrown upon others. But it is no less true that there is scarcely a manufacture in England which has not been defended in the spirit of the narrowest and most jealous monopoly, and the growing ascendency of the commercial classes after the Revolution is nowhere more apparent than in the multiplied restrictions of the English Commercial Code.

London on this occasion exhibited an honourable neutrality, but from all the other great manufacturing towns instructions and petitions poured in. Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, and Bristol were conspicuous in the opposition, and threats were even uttered in Parliament that the loyalty of the great towns was contingent

upon the maintenance of the restrictions.[1] Burke lost his seat for Bristol chiefly on account of the courageous and very brilliant part he had taken on this question, and Lord North was so intimidated that he consented to reduce the measure to the smallest proportions. The theory of the amended Navigation Act was indeed abandoned. Vessels built in Ireland were to be henceforth considered British-built, and were to be entitled to receive the bounties in fisheries of every kind, but the Irish were forbidden absolutely to export to the colonies wool, woollen and cotton manufactures, hats, glass, hops, gunpowder and coals. They were forbidden to export iron or ironwares till the Irish Parliament had imposed a prescribed duty upon them. They were obliged in like manner to charge duties and taxes on all their exported manufactures, equivalent to those paid on similar articles of British fabric, and they were still forbidden to import goods direct from the colonies. Cotton yarn home-spun in Ireland might, however, now be imported into England free of duty.[2]

The concession was plainly insufficient for the necessities of Ireland, and at a time when commerce with America was wholly suspended it was almost nugatory. It marked, however, the gradual subversion of the old policy of restriction. Nor was this the only sign of concession. The year 1778 is also very memorable in Irish history as witnessing the first considerable step towards the abolition of the penal code.

The almost absolute silence about the Catholic population of Ireland in the present chapter will perhaps have already struck the reader. The truth is that the period of tension and acute conflict between the two

[1] *Annual Register*, 1778. *Parl. Hist.* xix. 1100–1126. Adolphus, ii. 552–553. Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 622, 623.

[2] 18 George III. c. 55, 56.

religions had passed, and the very name of Papist rarely occurs in Irish politics. Of purely religious intolerance there was now very little, though we may still find a few signs that Catholicism as a religion was looked upon as an evil. The Charter Schools, which were distinctly proselytising, were steadily encouraged by the Irish Parliament. Under Lord Townshend, 10*l.* was added to the annual sum granted to any priest who became a convert. The merchants and traders of Dublin, in petitioning for a limitation of the duration of Parliament, urged among other reasons that it 'would render the generality of landlords assiduous in procuring Protestant tenants, and by such visible advantages to Protestants induce Catholics to conform.'[1] The Irish Privy Council, in 1772, recommending a Bill for enabling Catholics to borrow on landed security, gave as one argument, that it may 'induce them to become Protestants in order to acquire landed property.'[2]

But in general there was little spirit of proselytism and still less religious enthusiasm among the Irish Protestants, and questions relating to Catholics were nearly always argued rather on economical and political than on religious grounds. There were politicians of no mean order who sincerely believed that the admission of Catholics to any degree of political power would be fatal to the stability of the country, and there was still an ignoble spirit of ascendency which looked down upon Catholics as upon a servile and subjugated caste, and resented, both on grounds of sentiment and on grounds of interest, any attempt to raise them. The penal laws made the Protestant landlord in a Catholic district little less than a despot. The lawyer found that they diminished the competition while they increased the business of his pro-

[1] O'Conor's *History of Irish Catholics*, p. 325.

[2] April 9, 1772.—Irish State Paper Office.

fession. Corporations had become under their influence small monopolising bodies which were able to levy oppressive quarterage on Catholic traders. In almost every walk of life when a Protestant and a Catholic were in competition, the former found the ascendency of his religion an advantage. Many who would never have sought ascendency if it had not been established, wished to preserve the privileges they had inherited, and the most worthless Protestant, if he had nothing else to boast of, at least found it pleasing to think that he was a member of a dominant race.

Traditional antipathies and distinctions, though they had lost their old vitality, passed languidly and passively into the mind, but they were only slightly and remotely connected with religion, and, as Arthur Young truly said, the penal laws were now directed much more against the property than against the creed of the Catholic. Though the whole Catholic system in Ireland existed only by connivance, it appears to have been practically unmolested. Even in Ulster, where the spirit of intolerance was much stronger than in other provinces, sumptuous mass-houses were everywhere arising,[1] and bishops and monks, as well as ordinary priests and schoolmasters, lived in the country without concealment or difficulty. Of the Catholic laity at least nineteen-twentieths were too poor and too ignorant to be affected by any disabling laws or to take any interest in political questions. The land-

[1] 'Till within these few years there was scarce a mass-house to be seen in the northern counties of Ulster. Now mass-houses are spreading over most parts of that country. Convents till of late were hid in corners. Now they are openly avowed in the very metropolis. From the Revolution till a few years ago mass-houses were little huts in remote and obscure places. Now they are sumptuous buildings in the most public and conspicuous places.'—*Some Arguments for Limiting the Duration of Parliaments* (Dublin, 1764), p. 5.

lords of the persuasion had dwindled, under many disabilities and many temptations to apostasy, into a small and insignificant body, who seldom appeared before the world except in times of great national danger, when, under the guidance of a few conspicuous Catholic peers, they came forward to express in hyperbolical terms their loyalty to the Crown. A great part of the more energetic Catholics passed steadily to the Continent. Shut out from the University, from the magistracy, from the legal profession in all its grades, from all forms of administration and political ambition, scarcely anything remained for them at home except industrial life, and a considerable body of wealthy Catholic merchants had grown up, especially at Cork, Limerick, and Waterford. Time, however, had gradually done its work. The habits and pursuits of all classes had been accommodated to their conditions, and a state of society which was in truth very anomalous had grown into a kind of second nature, and was acquiesced in without much conflict or irritation.[1]

The Catholic Association, which was founded in 1759 by a physician named Curry, by the antiquary Charles O'Conor, and by a Waterford gentleman named Wyse, was the first important effort to create an independent Catholic opinion. The object was to establish a committee in Dublin comprising representatives of every Catholic diocese, to watch over the interests of the whole body. Curry himself exercised a very considerable influence upon opinion by his historical works, which

[1] Henry Brooke, writing in defence of the Catholics in 1762, says there are penal laws 'which if put in execution would not suffer a single Papist to breathe beyond the bars of a jail in Ireland. But though those laws are still in force, it is long since they have been in action. They hang like a sword by a thread over the heads of those people, and Papists walk under it in security and peace; for whoever should adventure to cut this thread would become ignominious and detestable in the land.'—*Trial of the Roman Catholics*, p. 226.

show both research and literary powers, and were especially valuable as bringing together some part of the overwhelming evidence which exists disproving the enormous falsehoods that had been circulated about the rebellion of 1641. The notion that this rebellion began with an unprovoked, deliberate, and general massacre of the unarmed and unsuspecting Protestant population, not less extensive than the massacre of St. Bartholomew, had passed, on the authority of Clarendon and Milton, into the popular belief, had been lately adopted by Hume with his usual carelessness and in its most exaggerated form, had been spread over the Continent by Voltaire, and has been frequently repeated to our own day. To the few persons who have examined with any care the original evidence on the subject its falsehood will appear sufficiently glaring, and it may be mentioned that Burke, who was well versed in Irish history, could scarcely speak with patience on the subject.[1] The collection of purely Protestant evidence which was brought together by Curry at least shook the popular tradition. A fund appears also to have been subscribed by some leading Catholics in order to pay Protestants to write in support of their cause. Henry Brooke, the well-known author of the 'Fool of Quality,' who wrote with great force and beauty in favour of the relaxation of the penal code, and

[1] 'Indeed, I *have* my opinion on that part of history, which I have often delivered to you—to everyone I have conversed with on the subject, and which I mean still to deliver whenever the occasion calls for it, which is that the Irish rebellion of 1641 was not only (as our silly things called "histories" call it), not utterly *unprovoked*, but that no history I have ever read furnishes an instance of any that was so *provoked*; and that in almost all parts of it, it has been extremely and most absurdly misrepresented.' — Burke's *Correspondence*, i. 337. See, too, Prior's *Life of Burke* (second ed.), i. 97. On the utter falseness of the common story about the rebellion in Ulster having broken out with a general massacre, see the recent and very decisive testimony of Mr. Gardiner.— *Fall of the Monarchy of Charles I.* ii. 309.

whose 'Trial of Roman Catholics' is one of the best exposures of the popular delusions about the rebellion of 1641, is said to have received money as well as information from the Catholic leaders.[1] A proposal was adopted, but apparently not carried into execution, of sending Dr. Johnson 50 guineas to induce him to write in favour of the Catholics, and in 1779 we find Burke refusing a gift of 300 guineas, which was offered him as a token of gratitude for his services in the cause.[2]

The system of exclusion first broke down in the recruiting service. As the demand for additional soldiers became continually more pressing, it must have occurred to many that the Catholic districts of Ireland had supplied the armies of France, Spain, Austria, Naples, and Piedmont with many thousands of young men who had proved themselves eminently brave and susceptible of discipline, and who had fought with dis-

[1] This is positively stated by Matthew O'Conor in his *History of the Irish Catholics*, pp. 262–264, and as this writer was the grandson and the possessor of the papers of Charles O'Conor, who is said to have been the person who negotiated with Brooke, and as he had no interest in depreciating the authority of a supporter of the Catholics, the statement seems to me true. Plowden, who also saw the papers of Charles O'Conor, though he does not mention Brooke, says that the Catholics 'adopted the measures proposed to them by Dr. Curry and Mr. O'Conor, of employing the most leading literary men of the day to write in favour of Catholic claims.' (*Historical Register*, i. 321.) Brooke's original *Farmer's Letters*, written in the panic of 1746, were very anti-Catholic, but he contends in a very beautiful private letter, that fourteen years of peace and unbroken Catholic loyalty had changed his views. (*Brookiana*, i. 185–204.) This is probably true, for the spirit of toleration had in these fourteen years been steadily increasing in Ireland. The very high character which Brooke bore among his contemporaries entitles him to a favourable construction, and his writings in favour of the Catholics bear strong internal marks of sincerity. At the same time, if he accepted money for writing, even in a cause in which he sincerely believed, this fact weakens his authority.

[2] Burke's *Correspondence*, ii. 281, 291. Plowden's *Hist. Register*, i. 321.

tinction on almost every battlefield on the Continent. The Irish Protestants were, from their circumstances, a very military body; but towards the close of the wars of Pitt the supply of recruits began to run short, and in 1758 or 1759, at the suggestion of the Duke of Bedford, while strict orders were still given for the exclusion of Catholics from the army, about 1,200 marines were raised in the Popish districts of Ireland.[1] The letters of Lord Halifax are extremely friendly towards the Catholics. The project which I have already noticed of raising seven Irish Catholic regiments for the allied service of Portugal, was introduced by Hamilton, the Chief Secretary, and supported by Hely Hutchinson. In the House of Lords the Catholics were warmly defended by Primate Stone, by the Chancellor, and by Lord Hillsborough; but a violent opposition was raised by some of the Protestant gentry under the leadership of the Earl of

[1] Bedford to Pitt, Jan. 20, 1760. Record Office. It was, I suppose, to these marines that Primate Stone alluded when in 1762 he eulogised 'the gallant conduct of the Irish Catholic sailors at Belleisle and at the recent conquest of Martinique.'—O'Conor's *History of the Irish Catholics*, p. 284. On the express exclusion of Catholics by the recruiting agents in the Viceroyalty of Bedford, see vol. i. p. 418. I must acknowledge myself, however, unable to reconcile the facts there stated with an assertion which appears to have been made in the English Parliament in 1771. It was then stated that 'a great part of the foot regiments at present in Ireland consisted of Catholics; that they were good soldiers, had always in the late war behaved well, particularly at Quebec, where one of the regiments (Lord Townshend's) was almost entirely Catholics. They were such good men in service that General Wolfe charged at the head of them.'—*Parl. Hist.* xvii. 172. Townshend's regiment was the 15th Foot, which was quartered in Ireland from 1749 to 1755 (Cannon's *History of the 15th Regiment*). Henry Brooke wrote: 'Many thousands of Popish converts have entered our pale since the first enacting of the said laws, but of those many thousands, not one in a hundred hath entered by the strait door of public recantation. They have entered by the way of our fleets, of our armies, and in much greater numbers by the way of domestic service in Protestant families.'—*Trial of Roman Catholics*, p. 245.

Carrick, and supported, apparently through factious motives, by Lord Shannon. 'The corps of Roman Catholics,' Lord Halifax wrote, 'which it has been proposed to his Majesty to send into the service of Portugal, gave occasion to a few members who are not satisfied with a very ample share of the King's authority and his bounty, publicly to appear in opposition to the measure, upon a ground, which, however untenable, is not wholly unpopular. In addition to the discontent which every appearance of favour or confidence to Roman Catholics gives to some here, others found that the withdrawing so many hands would raise the price of labour and consequently lower the value of their estates. Out of these materials of dissatisfaction, in the midst of the happiest and most perfect unanimity which has ever been known in this Parliament, an opposition to this measure was raised.' Halifax ascribes to this opposition the reports which were industriously circulated that the Whiteboy outrages were of the nature of a Popish insurrection. 'I can venture to assure your Lordship,' he adds, 'that if his Majesty should accidentally lay aside the plan of the Roman Catholic corps, he will hear nothing further of the rioters except their just punishment.'[1]

Charlemont, who was probably the most independent and patriotic of the Irish peers, on this occasion supported the Government, and the account he gives of the nature of the opposition to the scheme agrees perfectly with that of Lord Halifax. He tells us that it was very unpopular among the Protestant gentry, who argued that it was dangerous to encourage the arming of so many men who might one day turn against England, and that the South and West of Ireland were too thinly populated to spare their population. Yet

[1] Halifax to Egremont, Feb. 8, April 17, 1762

'three thousand men,' he says, 'could scarcely be supposed capable of annihilating the cultivation of two great provinces; neither did they seem well entitled to the benefit of this argument by whose oppression double this number were annually compelled to emigration; and it was but too evident that a principle of the most detestable nature lay hidden under this specious mode of reasoning. The Protestant Bashaws of the South and West were loth to resign so many of those wretches whom they looked upon and treated as their slaves.' The opposition was so strong and so threatening that the Government thought it wise to lay aside the scheme.[1]

From this time, however, the instructions to recruiting agents to enlist no one but Protestants were silently dropped, though it is worthy of notice that Lord Hertford, when going over to Ireland, was especially ordered to take care that the laws not allowing Papists to bear arms without license should be observed.[2] The army became gradually a resource for impoverished and adventurous Catholics, and although the question of recruiting naturally fell into the background during the peace, it revived in the administration of Lord Townshend at the time of the augmentation of the forces and of the complication about the Falkland Isles. Townshend advocated a policy directly opposite to that of his predecessors. He argued that 'as the trade and manufactures of Ireland are almost totally carried on by Protestants, the number of whom is very small in proportion to the number of Papists,' it was of the utmost importance that Protestants should not be taken away for foreign service, and he proposed that Papists, and Papists alone, should be enlisted. 'A considerable number of able men might be raised from amongst them in a short space of time in the provinces of

[1] Charlemont MS. *Autobiography.*

[2] Instructions to Lord Hertford, Aug. 9, 1765. Record Office.

Leinster, Munster, and Connaught.' Rochford answered that the arguments of Townshend had convinced the King of the impropriety of drawing off a number of Protestants from those parts of the country where the chief manufactures were carried on; that he could not without a special Act of Parliament order the recruiting agents to restrict themselves to Roman Catholics, but that in the present very pressing exigency he authorised them to make Leinster, Munster, and Connaught their recruiting grounds.[1]

In this manner the Catholics were silently admitted into the British army, of which they have ever since formed a large and a distinguished part. At the beginning of the American war their leading gentry came forward, as usual, to testify their unbounded loyalty to the Sovereign, and the Irish Catholics do not appear to have shown any of that sympathy with the Americans which was evident among the Presbyterians. Constitutional questions, indeed, about the respective limits of Imperial and provincial legislatures, and about the relations which should subsist between taxation and representation, can have had very little interest or meaning to men who were excluded from every form of political liberty and power. The Irish emigrants, who were so conspicuous in the American ranks, were chiefly, though not exclusively, Protestants,[2] and the Catholics of Canada remained firm in their allegiance

[1] Dec. 27, 1770, Townshend to Rochford. Jan. 11, 1771, Rochford to Townshend. A Bill was introduced into the English Parliament about this time authorising (among other provisions) the East India Company to raise recruits in Ireland among the Catholics, but it was not passed. *Parl. Hist.* xvii. 171–173.

[2] Charles Caroll, who principally determined Maryland to take part in the Revolution, and who was the last survivor of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, was a Catholic of Irish descent; and John Barry, who gained much distinction as a sailor in the war of the Revolution, was a Catholic, born at Wexford.

to the Crown. In Ireland the demand for recruits was very great, and Catholics were readily accepted, and appear to have enlisted in large numbers.[1] Their worship, if it was not actively encouraged, seems to have been at least unimpeded, but the officers were still exclusively Protestant.[2]

While the system of penal restrictions was thus giving way on one side through the pressure of military motives, it was assailed on another side on economical grounds. A large proportion of the Irish landlords were poor and extravagant men in constant need of money, and a great part of Irish land could only be kept in tolerable condition by a large and frequent expenditure in drainage. Under these circumstances, the evil of the law which forbade Catholics from lending money on landed security was keenly felt. It added another to the many drains of wealth which exhausted the nation, for Catholics who had made fortunes in industrial life were naturally led to invest them in

[1] Harcourt sent to Rochford a report from a revenue officer at Cork, who, after describing the seditious language of the Presbyterians, continues: 'Their invectives against the Papists, and their ridiculing every support they can give, and, above all, the stories they have spread that the common people are averse to enlisting, have done the recruiting good service. . . . The rich Papists declare they will spend their last shilling or get men. . . . and that the more people talk against them the more conspicuous their loyalty will be. . . . The money begins to fly, and as Papists have it in plenty, they are forcing trade.'—Harcourt to Rochford, Aug. 16, 1775.

[2] Campbell's *Philosophical Survey*, pp. 301, 302. There is a correspondence in the Record Office about a recruiting officer at Sligo, who at the beginning of 1776 published an advertisement promising that the Catholics who enlisted in his regiment should have their own chaplain, and telling the recruits to bring recommendations from their parish priests. Both Harcourt and the colonel of the regiment repudiated this advertisement as wholly unauthorised, and the offending officer was put in arrest and threatened with dismissal. Harcourt to Weymouth, Feb. 28. Captain Suly to Cunningham, March 13. Blaquiere to North, Feb. 28, 1776.

foreign securities. The law was part of a policy which the English Government and the Irish Parliament had, with perfect harmony and with undeviating perseverance, pursued ever since the Revolution, and which deserves to be regarded as one of the most signal instances of short-sightedness recorded in the history of legislation. It was their steady object to deprive the Catholics of all the consequence and power which landed property affords, to exclude them not only from ownership, but from all that bordered upon ownership of the soil; to make the whole class of landowners and long leaseholders Protestants, while the smaller tenants were almost exclusively Catholic, and thus to maintain, and intensify, that profound division and alienation of classes which is the master difficulty of all modern legislation for Ireland, the chief source both of the turbulence and disloyalty of the nation.

A Bill to enable Catholics to invest money in mortgages upon land was first introduced into the Irish House of Commons by Mr. Monck Mason, an independent member, in 1761, carried by a majority of twelve, but rejected in England by the Privy Council. Its success in Ireland was probably due to surprise, for it was discussed on the last day of the session, when only sixty-two members were present; and in the next session a similar Bill, being strongly opposed by the Government, was thrown out by 138 to 53. The chief argument against it appears to have been, that it would enable Catholics to interfere with the management of Protestants' estates, for immediately after the defeat a motion was made for the introduction of heads of a new Bill with a special clause guarding against such interference; but this motion, though warmly supported by the legal members of the House, was opposed by the Government, and defeated by 97 to 53.[1] In 1771,

[1] Caldwell's *Debates*, p. 511. Northumberland to Halifax, Feb. 8, 1764.

however, a small concession was made. Catholics who desired to expend money and labour in reclaiming what were now unprofitable marshes, were enabled to take leases of sixty-one years for fifty acres of bog, with half an acre of adjoining arable land for the site of a house, and, for seven years after the bog was reclaimed, it was exempted from tithes and cesses. The extreme jealousy with which all concessions to Catholics relating to land were regarded, is curiously illustrated by clauses making it necessary to the validity of the lease that the bog should be at least four feet deep, that half of it should be reclaimed within twenty-one years, and that it should not lie within a mile of any city or market town. This was the first step that was taken towards the repeal of the penal code.[1]

In 1772 Monck Mason again brought forward his Bill for enabling Catholics to lend money on the security of landed property, and it became evident that the question had made much progress. At least three times, during the administrations of Lord Townshend and Lord Harcourt, Bills to this effect appear to have been carried, to have been recommended by the Irish Privy Council, and to have been lost through opposition in England.[2] Townshend, in a private letter to Rochford, strongly opposed the concession. It would lead, he said, to attempts to obtain further relaxations of the Popery laws, which were intended to be perpetual, and which had already so far operated 'that at this day there is no Popish family remaining of any great weight for landed property.' It 'tended to revive an influence which it had been the study of the Legislature to destroy,' and although hopes were entertained that it would draw

[1] 11 & 12 George III. c. 21.

[2] 1771, 1772, 1774. *Letter Books into England* (Irish Record Office). The Bill of 1771 took its rise in the House of Lords. (See the letter of Townshend and Privy Council, April 9, 1772, Irish Record Office.)

large sums from the Continent, and greatly stimulate the circulation of money, its political dangers would more than counterbalance its economical advantages. 'There is great personal weight,' he said, 'amongst the professors of that religion, and the majority of the people of Ireland consists of Papists.' The measure would 'give the Popish creditors such a control over those who are in debt as may in particular times operate very strongly.'[1] A Bill for enabling Catholics under certain conditions to take leases for lives was introduced into the House of Commons in 1774, but it does not appear to have been carried beyond its earliest stages.[2]

In spite of the language employed by Townshend, it would not be correct to ascribe to the English Government of this time any systematic hostility to Catholics. The general Irish policy of the successive English ministers in the early years of George III. varied but little, and it may be easily described. They were inflexibly opposed to the independence of the Irish Parliament, in the interests of English authority, and in order to avoid the embarrassment of a fresh parliamentary opposition. They were anxious to maintain the hereditary revenue as a kind of privy purse for the King, to distribute a large number of Irish places and pensions among their English supporters, to make use of the remainder to maintain a complete ascendency in the Irish Parliament, and to induce that Parliament to raise a very large proportion of the military establishments of the Empire. But, apart from these ends, they had every wish to govern wisely, mildly, and justly, and they were actuated by no spirit of malevolence or intolerance. Viceroys usually threw themselves into the interests of the country they governed. The instructions given them by the

[1] April 10, 1772, Townshend to Rochford (Record Office).
[2] Commons' *Journals*, xvi. 419.

Home Government show a sincere desire for the well-being of Ireland, and it is probable that, both on commercial and religious questions, the English ministers would have done much if they had not feared embarrassments at home. Ireland had no direct influence in the English Parliament, yet an Irish question might easily overthrow an English ministry, and no English ministry was prepared to encounter defeat on such grounds. It was thus that Lord North consented to abandon the chief parts of the commercial bill of 1778 on account of the opposition of the English manufacturers; and Governments, while emphatically acknowledging the loyalty of the Catholics, feared to bring in any measure for their relief, though they continued on cordial terms with their leaders, and exercised a constant though silent influence in their favour. The anxiety of Lord Halifax to disculpate the Catholics as such from all complicity with the Whiteboy movement is very significant. Perhaps the only provision of the Popery code which can be completely justified was that depriving the Catholic owner of an advowson, of the power of appointing a rector of the Established Church. It appears, however, from letters of Lord Kenmare that the Government, when appointing the clergyman of an advowson in his gift, systematically acted upon his recommendation.[1] As

[1] May 15, 1777, Lord Kenmare wrote to the Lord Lieutenant: 'The living of Hospital, co. Limerick, is in my patent. By the law of Ireland the patronage of recusants is vested in the Crown; the incumbent, the Rev. R. Herbert, is lately dead. He was presented to it on my recommendation by my Lord Townshend; and his predecessor, Mr. Thomas Orpin, obtained it through the same from the late Earl of Harrington. May I presume to recommend to your Excellency Mr. John Lewis, of the College of Dublin?' This letter is endorsed: 'This usage must be particularly inquired into.' On July 22, 1785, Lord Kenmare again wrote, recommending a particular clergyman for the living of Killarney, of which he was patron.—*Miscellaneous Papers*, Chief Secretary's Office, Irish State Paper Office.

long as the penal laws subsisted, the condition of the Catholics depended largely on the conduct of the agents of the Crown, and it was in a great degree owing to their connivance that the portions of the code which related to the Catholic worship had been allowed to fall into complete desuetude. There was a general feeling spreading in Ireland, as in England, that penal laws against religion belonged to another age; but it is a very memorable and well-attested fact that the Irish Catholics for a long time before 1778 looked upon the Government, not as their oppressor, but as their protector, and sympathised much more strongly with their English rulers than with their native Parliament.[1] At the end of 1767, or in the beginning of 1768, prayers for the King and Royal Family were offered up in the Catholic churches for the first time since the Revolution.[2] The tyrannical and apparently illegal imposts called quarterage, which were levied by the Protestant corporations on Catholic traders, were much resisted in the beginning of the reign of George III., and a Bill to establish and define them was introduced into the Commons by Lucas in 1767, but though it passed the House, the Government stifled it in the Privy Council.[3]

In 1774 a measure was carried which, without bestowing any positive privilege on the Catholics, enabled them to attest their loyalty by taking, before a justice of the peace, the oath of allegiance, accompanied by a

[1] Speaking of the Bill of 1778 in favour of the Catholics, Charlemont wrote: 'I clearly saw the necessity, previous to our intended efforts [for legislative independence], of conciliating the affections of a body of men so very considerable from their numbers, and of dividing at least between Government and Parliament that attachment which for obvious reasons *had hitherto been confined to the former*.'—*MS. Autobiography.*

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1768, p. 42. Killen's *Ecclesiastical History*, ii. 293.

[3] O'Conor's *History of the Irish Catholics*, pp. 329, 330.

declaration prescribed by law. The Catholic who subscribed this declaration solemnly renounced all allegiance to the Stuarts, repudiated the opinion that heretics might be lawfully murdered, that faith need not be kept with them, and that excommunicated sovereigns may be deposed or murdered, and denied that the Pope had or ought to have 'any temporal or civil jurisdiction, power, superiority, or pre-eminence directly or indirectly' within the realm.[1] It is worthy of notice that, a few years before, De Burgo, the Bishop of Ossory, in his 'Hibernia Dominicana,' had strongly asserted the unlawfulness of a similar oath, but now the bishops of Munster, without even consulting Rome, met at Cork and unanimously agreed that the oath contained nothing contrary to their faith, and they took the same occasion of condemning the treatise of the Bishop of Ossory, and of proclaiming their emphatic loyalty to George III. The Congregation De Propaganda Fide afterwards mildly censured them for expressing their opinion without consulting Rome; they stated that the oath, though not contrary to orthodoxy, appeared to them liable to misconstruction; and in the Ultramontane seminaries on the Continent it was much condemned, but in Ireland both ecclesiastics and laymen accepted it with alacrity. It was powerfully defended by O'Leary, and it contributed much to legalise the position of the Catholics, and to allay the fears of those who saw in the rebellion of the Whiteboys against tithes the symptoms of a Popish insurrection.[2]

It was noticed by a writer in 1775 that 'the courts of justice have long . . . very much discountenanced

[1] 13 & 14 George III. c. 35.

[2] See a full history of the discussions relating to this oath.—England's *Life of O'Leary*, pp. 58-79. The form of declaration had been drawn up by the Catholic Association at Dublin, with the approval of their Archbishop.

the strict execution of the Popery laws,' and that a practice had grown up of evading, by the assistance of Protestants, a portion even of the laws relating to landed property. A Protestant friend filed a bill of discovery against a Catholic landlord, obtained the legal title to his estate, held it in trust for him, and enabled him under the shelter of a Protestant name to evade the chief disabilities of the code.[1] The expense of prosecuting suits under the penal code, and the systematic hostility of the judges, appear to have greatly diminished their number. In 1776, Chief Baron Foster told Arthur Young that he did not know a single instance of a Protestant discoverer getting a lease by proving lands to be let under two-thirds of their value to a Catholic.[2]

It is difficult to reconcile this last statement with the language of a very powerful petition which was presented to the King in 1777 by the Irish Catholic peers and by more than 300 of the principal Catholic gentry.[3] They gratefully acknowledge that much had been done to moderate the rigorous execution of some of the laws, but they complain that 'several, and those the most severe and distressing, execute themselves with the most fatal certainty.' They complain of their

[1] 'By the connivance of the courts, Bills of Equity called bills of discovery, are now used in the nature of common recoveries, to obtain decrees for Protestants ultimately in trust for Papists. And although by means of the great expense attending this practice, and the uncertainty of its being effectual, such decrees are seldom worth being sought for, being at best a precarious security that entirely depends upon private honesty and fidelity, yet it serves to show the temper of the people, that they have a confidence in the integrity of Protestants, and that a little encouragement would finally extinguish every latent spark of jealousy.'—*An Inquiry into the Policy of the Popery Laws* (Dublin, 1775), pp. 108, 109.

[2] Arthur Young's *Tour*, i. 125.

[3] Oct. 13, 1777, *Irish Departmental Correspondence*, Irish State Paper Office. This petition is printed in Curry's *State of the Catholics of Ireland*, ii. 287-293.

inability to purchase land, to hold land in farm 'except on a tenure extremely scanted both in profit and in time,' and to raise the value of their hired farms by drainage or inclosures without making themselves liable to a forfeiture of their leases. 'There are a set of men,' they continue, 'who make it their employment to pry into our miserable property, to drag us into the courts, and to compel us to confess, on our oaths and under the penalties of perjury, whether we have in any instance acquired a property in the smallest degree exceeding what the rigour of the law has admitted; and in some cases the informers, without any other merit than that of their discovery, are invested (to the daily ruin of several industrious, innocent families) not only with the surplus in which the law is exceeded, but with the whole body of the estate and interest so discovered.' In Ireland, they say, informers have almost worn off the infamy that in other countries attaches to their character, 'and have grown into some repute by the frequency and success of their practices.' They complain, however, with especial bitterness of the clauses which enable a son, however undutiful and profligate, by conforming to the Established Church, not only to deprive his father of the power of disposing of or mortgaging his property as the exigencies of his affairs may require, but also himself 'to mortgage, sell, or otherwise alienate the reversion of that estate from the family for ever—a regulation by which a father, contrary to the order of nature, is put under the power of his son, and an early dissoluteness is not only suffered but encouraged, by giving a pernicious privilege, the frequent use of which has broken the hearts of many deserving parents, and entailed poverty and despair on some of the most ancient and opulent families of this kingdom,' while on his deathbed the Catholic has 'the melancholy and almost certain prospect of leaving

neither peace nor fortune to his children, for by that law which bestows the whole fortune on the first conformist,[1] or on nonconformity disperses it amongst the children, incurable jealousies and animosities have arisen.'

It was this portion of the penal code which was probably the most efficacious, and was certainly the most profoundly demoralising. Everyone who has mixed much in the world knows how frequently, even in the most religious and the most honourable families, some one member will gravitate, as by an irresistible instinct, into profligacy, dissipation, extravagance, disreputable company, hopeless debt, an utter wreck of moral principle. There are few men who cannot recall many such instances, and who have not had some opportunity of realising the anguish they produce. In Ireland in the eighteenth century they were proportionately far more numerous than at present. Hard drinking, exaggerated sporting tastes, the tone of idleness, extravagance, and improvidence which was so prevalent in the upper classes made the temptations of young men more than commonly great, and there were probably few large families among the gentry who could not point to at least one member who was gliding rapidly down the steep. Such a member, if he were the son of a Catholic landlord, had only to discard a religion which had no influence over his life, to become at once the favoured child of the law. He reduced his father to the most humiliating dependence, prevented him from selling, mortgaging, or otherwise disposing of his property, secured for himself an immediate main-

[1] This statement is curiously inaccurate. 2 Anne, c. 6, and 8 Anne, c. 3, provided that if any child of a Catholic conformed he should be at once secured a present maintenance and a further portion out of his father's estates, but it was only the eldest son who by conformity could secure the whole estate.

tenance, to the sacrifice of the prospects of all the other members of his family; and if he were an elder son he had always, when debts began to multiply and creditors grew pressing, the resource of raising a mortgage on the family estate without his father's consent, or selling the reversion he had secured. In this manner, by the direct intention of the law, estates, profligates, and spendthrifts, all passed in a steady stream into the Established Church.

This result was, no doubt, anticipated, but there was another consequence of the laws which no one appears to have foreseen, and which, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, began to produce a new class of converts. Debarred from education at home, a great part of the more wealthy Catholic families sent their children to France, and it began to be noticed that the young men who returned from thence were of a very different type from the fervent and simple-minded Catholics of the early years of the century. They came from a country where the whole intellectual energy, where all that was brilliant and fashionable, as well as all that was learned and profound, was intensely anti-Christian. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, D'Alembert were the undisputed kings of literature. Condillac, Helvétius, and Holbach dictated the philosophy of the day. As early as 1753, D'Argenson had noticed that the number of communicants was rapidly diminishing, that the College of Jesuits was deserted, that the priests were on all sides ridiculed or hated, and as the century moved on, the anti-christian spirit became far stronger and more serious. The tone of literature, the tone of science, the tone of the drawing-rooms was no longer that of scepticism, but of an assured and derisive incredulity. In the Church of Bossuet, Massillon, and Bourdaloue, not a voice of any weight or power was heard in defence of Christianity,

and the few who defended it did so mainly on grounds of expediency. The most conspicuous of the clergy had caught the prevailing spirit. Popular preachers began to drop the name of Christ from their sermons, and to speak only of 'the legislator of the Christians.' Great bishops and priors were known in their familiar circles to scoff at the popular belief, and it was said by a good observer that there were probably not more than four or five sincere Christians in the French episcopacy. There was a profound and serious division between atheists of the school of Holbach and deists of the school of Rousseau, but among the overwhelming majority of educated Frenchmen there were but two opinions about Christianity. There were those who regarded it as a noxious superstition which ought to be abolished, and there were those who regarded it as a harmless and beneficent superstition which must, in the interests of social order, be maintained.[1]

Such ways of thinking had been very rare in Ireland, but the circumstances of the Catholics secured a steady influx of French thought. Men who were formed in this intellectual atmosphere were often eminently intelligent, honourable, and moral, but they were not likely to place themselves under a crowd of disabilities for the sake of Catholicism, or to feel any great scruple about giving a nominal adhesion to a religion which was the established faith of their country, and which they believed to be not more false, and somewhat less grotesquely superstitious, than the faith of their fathers. The small stream of educated converts

[1] See many illustrations of this in Taine's *Ancien Régime*, pp. 375–384. A remarkable example of the extreme incredulity which was sometimes found among high-placed ecclesiastics is furnished by the life and writings of the Benedictine monk Dom Deschamps. See the curious book of Beaussire, *Antécédents de l'Hégelianisme dans la Philosophie Française* (Paris, 1865).

consisting chiefly of eldest sons of landlords and of men who desired to enter the law, perceptibly increased, though there does not appear to have been any spirit of religious proselytism among the Protestants, and though the administration of the penal code had been greatly relaxed. Between 1702 and 1773, 4,055 converts only, had been registered in the Court of Chancery, and it was noticed that no less than 2,177 of these had been registered within the last twenty-one years.[1]

More than eighty years had now passed by since any act of rebellion or conspiracy or political turbulence had been proved against Catholics in Ireland. They had maintained an absolute, unbroken tranquillity during the Scotch rebellion of 1715, during the expedition organised against the House of Hanover by Alberoni in 1719, during the great rebellion of 1745, during the long and desperate war that terminated in 1763, and amid all the complications that had since arisen. Standing completely apart from the factions and violence of Protestant politics, they had rarely appeared in public life except to proffer their services to the Crown; and officials in high position had repeatedly acknowledged that the severest scrutiny had discovered no trace of treasonable conduct among them, and had consented that, in times of great danger to the Empire, Ireland should be left almost destitute of troops. Those who might have been leaders or agents in sedition had long since been scattered over the Continent. The ascendency of the landlords over their tenants was as yet undisputed, and the Catholic landlords were ardent in their loyalty to the Crown. No independent Catholic press had yet arisen. The mass of the population remained torpid, degraded, and ignorant; but,

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, i. 266.

although crimes of violence and turbulence were common among them, those crimes were wholly unconnected with politics. Protestants were beginning to ask themselves how long, under such circumstances, the system of proscription was to continue—whether laws which paralysed the industry of the great majority of the Irish people, which kept them in enforced ignorance and poverty, which directly discouraged those manly and energetic qualities that are most essential to national well-being, could be or ought to be maintained for ever.

The general aspect of Catholicism, both in Europe and America, greatly strengthened the case. Probably at no period since the days of Constantine was Catholicism so free from domineering and aggressive tendencies as during the Pontificates of Benedict XIV. and his three successors. The spirit of Ultramontanism seemed to have almost evaporated even in Italian counsels, and in Western Europe the prevailing type of theology was studiously moderate. In 1757, the Catholic Association issued a declaration of principles drawn up by O'Keefe, the Bishop of Kildare, in which they abjured in the strongest terms the doctrine that any ecclesiastical power in the Church had the right of deposing sovereigns, absolving subjects from their oaths, making war upon heretics as such, exercising any temporal power or jurisdiction in Ireland, or committing any act which is in its own nature immoral. They denied with much truth that the infallibility of the Pope was an article of the Catholic creed, and they solemnly pledged themselves to do nothing to disturb or weaken the existing establishments either of property, government, or religion.[1] All over Europe the influence of the Catholic clergy was employed on the side of autho-

[1] Parnell's *Hist. of the Penal Laws*, pp. 78–82.

rity, and Catholic populations were nearly everywhere almost wholly destitute of that spirit of political self-assertion, and of that systematic jealousy of authority which leads to civil liberty, but which also makes nations difficult to govern. Nearly all the political insurrections of modern times had been among Protestants. Political liberty since the Reformation had nearly everywhere followed its banner, and the countries where even the worst rulers found themselves most uncontrolled were nearly everywhere Catholic. 'I hold a Popish people,' wrote Henry Brooke, with great force and justice, 'to be of all people the most amenable and submissive to rulers, whatever the form or nature of that State may be under which they shall happen to be subjected.'[1] The experiment of governing Catholics and Protestants by the same laws and under Protestant rulers had been already frequently tried. In Holland it had been for generations the policy of the Protestants to root the Catholics in the soil by granting them the same liberty of worship as their fellow-countrymen, and thus giving them the same interest in the prosperity of the State; and the result had been that historical antipathies, scarcely less violent than those of Ireland, seemed to have entirely disappeared. In Saxony, in Silesia, and in Hanover, the two religions had been successfully blended. The inhabitants of Minorca were originally Spaniards. From the time of the cession of the island to England at the Peace of Utrecht, they had been permitted the full enjoyment of their religion, and, although there had been two wars with Spain since the cession, and though the island had been conquered by France, the inhabitants had never shown the smallest impatience of English rule. In 1774 a new experiment of the same kind had been tried in Canada by the Quebec Act, and it was

[1] *Brookiana*, i. 193.

already evident that, while the old Anglo-Saxon colonies were fast breaking from the mother country, the newly acquired Catholic province was disposed to remain firm in its allegiance.

These considerations were beginning to have their weight upon Irish politicians, and in truth, if the question had been merely one of religion, if it had not been aggravated by a confiscation of property and by profound historical antipathies and antagonisms, it would probably have presented little difficulty. It was, however, quite certain that the great mass of the Catholic population in Ireland were as yet utterly unfit for the exercise of political power except under the guidance and training of the more enlightened classes. In a well-constituted society, property, tradition, and social eminence would have marked out for them natural leaders of their own creed. In Ireland such leaders did not, as a rule, exist, and it was the misfortune of the country that the most powerful influences dissociated the upper classes from the lower. Was it possible for a gentry who were almost all Protestant, and who were burdened by so many unhappy historical antecedents, to fulfil the indispensable task of leading, controlling, and educating the masses of their countrymen? On the answer to this question the political future of Ireland mainly depended.

It was only by slow degrees that Irish Protestant opinion became actively favourable to the Catholics. Whig traditions in Ireland, as in England, were extremely anti-Catholic, and many of the earlier defenders of Irish liberty desired that liberty only for a small minority of their fellow-countrymen. Anthony Malone, it is true, seems to have early seen the evil of the penal laws, and Langrishe and Dennis Daly were steady friends of the Catholics,[1] but Lucas, who was long so

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, i. 59, 265–267, 290.

prominent in the Irish national party, was virulently and aggressively anti-Catholic.[1] No one wrote more ably against the commercial restrictions than Sir James Caldwell, but when the Bill enabling Catholics to lend money on landed security was introduced, this measure, which was politically so moderate and economically so beneficial, was opposed by Caldwell not only in the Parliament but in the Press. He dilated upon the contrast between the indifference of the Protestant clergy and the indefatigable earnestness of the Catholic priests, and upon the peculiar intensity which a long period of persecution had given to the Catholicity of the Irish people.[2] He said that there was scarcely a Popish family in Ireland which had not some relative who was either a priest, or enlisted in a foreign army, or engaged in trade in France or Spain; that their children were all taught Latin in the hedge schools which were scattered through the southern parts of the kingdom in order to qualify for foreign service; that the few Popish landlords had none but Papists on their estates; that one Justin McCarthy, merely by the number of his debtors, kept the Protestants of a large district in awe of him, and had prevented during many years the execution of the penal code; and he concluded that any measure which increased the power of Catholics would be dangerous to Ireland. Flood was prepared to give

[1] Plowden's *Historical Register*, i. 302. O'Conor's *History of the Irish Catholics*, p. 330.

[2] 'A Papist in a Popish country may be only nominally so . . . but no man in Ireland who is indifferent about religious principles and duties is a Papist nominally. The nominal Papist in Ireland is a Papist in fact; he has not the name but the essence of his religion, and however he may err in his morals, he is always a sincere Papist as to his tenets, and by his profession of that religion he gives a public, a constant, and an indubitable test that he will sacrifice interest to what he believes to be his duty.'—*Examination whether it is expedient to enable Papists to take Real Securities*, by Sir James Caldwell, F.R.S. (Dublin, 1764), p. 20.

the Catholics complete religious toleration and some economical advantages, among others the right of taking long leases and even of purchasing land;[1] but through the whole of his career he was inflexibly opposed to giving them any measure of political power.

Charlemont, one of the purest as well as one of the most prominent of Irish patriots, took the same course. While frequently supporting measures for mitigating the economical condition of the Irish Catholics, he steadily maintained that neither arms nor votes could be safely given to them. In a private letter to one of his most intimate friends, he predicted that at least a century must pass before the Catholics could be safely entrusted with the rights of citizens,[2] and in an autobiographical fragment which he bequeathed to his children he expressed his full approbation of the penal code. It was absolutely necessary, he said, that the armed minority should take away from their numerous antagonists every element of power. 'Their inferiority in numbers could only be compensated by such a superiority in arms and discipline as might make one man equal to ten.' An exclusive legislative power was necessary, and therefore the penal laws relating to land were necessary, and it was good policy to hold out every inducement to con-

[1] Warden Flood's *Life of Flood*, p. 145. Grattan's *Life*, i. 266.

[2] 'You say, and you say truly, that the door of education should previously be opened [to the Catholics], and an indulgence granted to the legal profession, and here agreeing with you, I am happy in the opportunity to declare that in anything I have said I never meant to insinuate that a day of assimilation and consequent communication of every franchise might not arise, though I cannot be as sanguine as you are, respecting the nearness of that period. It would, in my opinion, require a century at least of the best education, before our semi-barbarians could be brought to assimilate with their fellow-subjects, and to a capacity of duly performing the functions of a citizen.'—Charlemont to Dr. Halliday, Dec. 18, 1791.—*Charlemont Papers.*

formity. 'From the natural operation of the laws, and from many other concomitant causes, the Protestants increased in strength, and the Catholics, though still retaining a great superiority in numbers, grew weaker. The greater part of the old Catholic gentry had, either from conviction or convenience, conformed to the established and ruling religion, and the quiet behaviour of the oppressed people had, or ought to have, well nigh obliterated the memory of their former excesses.'[1]

While himself firmly holding these views, Charlemont acknowledged that towards 1778 a great and rapid change had passed over the sentiments of the Irish Protestants, and he has taken much pains to analyse its causes. He attributes it partly to a prevailing spirit of toleration, springing in his opinion 'rather from fashionable Deism than from Christianity, which was now unfortunately much out of fashion,' and partly to the growth of a considerable Catholic interest which, directly or indirectly, exercised some political power. Catholics who had conformed in order to keep their lands, or to enter the law, were still united by blood and friendship and sympathy to the recusant body. In the southern counties, at the time when the provision trade was flourishing, many Catholic merchants had acquired large fortunes and great local influence, and they exercised some indirect patronage over Protestants, and were the chief money-lenders in the island. In some counties, land was let in very large portions to Catholic tenants, and it was the obvious interest of the landlords that those tenants should not be prevented by law from improving their farms. But in addition to these reasons there were others of a more purely political character. The

[1] *Charlemont Papers.* So Flood, in his speech on the Catholic question in 1782, said: 'The laws that followed this event [the Revolution], were not laws of persecution, but of political necessity.'—*Life of Flood*, p. 144.

desire for national independence was growing stronger and stronger in Ireland. The wretched condition of the finances, the corrupt disposal of patronage, the refusal of the English Parliament to grant that commercial liberty which was essential to Irish prosperity, and, above all, the example of America, had strengthened incalculably the old spirit of Swift and of Molyneux. In the words of Flood, 'a voice from America had shouted to liberty,' and, although the loyalty of the Irish Protestants to the English Crown was unshaken, there had arisen among them a strong aspiration towards legislative independence, and a conviction that it could only be attained if the Catholics were at least conciliated.

A great personal influence had also arisen in the Irish Parliament. A young man had lately entered its walls whose eloquence—surcharged, indeed, with epigram, and disfigured by a strong, though perfectly unaffected mannerism, but in the highest degree original, vivid, nervous, thoughtful, and picturesque—placed him, for the space of forty years and in two Legislatures, in the first rank of contemporary orators, while his transparent simplicity and purity of character, and his ardent and self-sacrificing patriotism, gave him a rare power of influencing those about him. It was the first principle of Henry Grattan that 'the Irish Protestant could never be free till the Irish Catholic had ceased to be a slave;' and as early as 1778 Charlemont attributed to the extraordinary eloquence and influence of Grattan a great part of the change which on the Catholic question had passed over the minds of the Irish Protestants.[1]

The Government also had but little reason to oppose it. Hitherto they had usually been the friends of the Catholics. They had carried the great measure by which the Catholic Church was established in Canada. They had just supported a Bill slightly mitigating the persecuting

[1] Autobiography, *Charlemont Papers*.

laws against the English Catholics, and they were quite sensible that a conciliatory policy towards Ireland was necessary. The country seemed on the verge of bankruptcy. Distress and misery, with their inevitable attendant, political discontent, were increasing. The Presbyterians were openly on the side of America; the example of the colonies was kindling a strong sentiment of nationality, and it was thought by many that Ireland, which had become the chief dependency of the Crown, would follow the example of the revolted colonies. The Government had every reason to strengthen its alliance with the majority of the nation which had not yet caught the contagion of American independence, and which naturally leaned most strongly on the side of authority, at a time when the country was almost undefended, and when two great Catholic Powers had just declared their hostility to Great Britain.[1]

A few years before, some unofficial communications on the subject are said to have taken place between the

[1] 'Government was now induced to court the Papists by their fear of the Protestants, and wished to oblige and strengthen that party which, as well from the influence of a servile religion as from its precarious situation in the country, was likely, they thought, to be wholly dependent on them, thus raising what they deemed a necessary barrier against those encroachments which they now began exceedingly, and not without reason, to dread.' — Autobiography, *Charlemont Papers*. Walpole, who was bitterly opposed to all concessions to the Irish Catholics, complains that about 1776. Colonel Dalrymple had been raising Roman Catholics in Ireland for the King's service, and had been assisted by the Popish Archbishop of Tuam, and he says that he had himself heard a person in very high office say 'that the Presbyterians were the worst subjects that the King had, and that the Roman Catholics were better subjects.' He mentions that Conolly, who was a conspicuous member of the Irish Parliament, and who had also a seat in the English one, said of Ireland: 'if the French land in the south every man there will join them, and if the Americans land in the north they will be as gladly received there by the Presbyterians.'—*Last Journals*, ii. pp. 25, 85, 235.

English Government and the Vatican, and Hervey, the Protestant Bishop of Derry, who was then at Rome, appears to have been mixed up with them.[1] This very singular personage, who will appear conspicuously in another part of this narrative, was steadily favourable to a Catholic Relief Bill. The measure of 1774, enabling the Catholics to testify their loyalty, is said to have been first suggested, and was strongly supported by him,[2] and in May 1778, he wrote from Rome an exceedingly alarming letter to Pery, the Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, predicting the terrible consequences that would ensue if the relief of the Catholics were delayed.[3] 'Ireland,' he said, 'if the war with France takes place, must almost inevitably be thrown into the greatest confusion; the first blow will certainly be directed there, and the Roman Catholics, exasperated by repeated disappointments, are ripe for an almost general revolt. Whether this disposition originated here, or was only stimulated and encouraged here, I cannot say; but of this I am very well informed, that no encouragement is wanting, and that, some few prudent persons excepted, the hopes of the remainder are as sanguine as their exhortations are animated. The real intention is to render Ireland independent, and to establish, as in the Swiss cantons, a reciprocal toleration of religions, to abolish all tithes except such as are to be paid by the Roman Catholics to their own clergy, and to throw themselves under the protection of France and if possible of Spain. If this attempt should not succeed, their project is then to make as general an

[1] *See Saint Priest, Hist. de la Chute des Jésuites*, pp. 131, 314.

[2] England's *Life of O'Leary*, pp. 53, 54.

[3] This letter is in a curious and valuable collection of letters to Pery (some of them by Burke), in the possession of Lord Emly, to whose kindness I owe my knowledge of them. They have been printed in a little magazine called *The Irish Monitor*, for April 1878.

emigration as possible, and to settle in that part of Spain which was offered to them some years ago, or else in a part of the Pope's territory which is within forty miles of Rome, and now actually preparing for some very extensive colony; and if my friend is not egregiously misinformed, this colony will be from Ireland. The disgust which prevails here upon the baffling of every attempt to relieve their countrymen is better conceived than expressed.' The bishop thinks that a 'reasonable concession in time' would secure the allegiance of the Catholics, and he had been writing copiously to Lord Hillsborough on the subject. What was required was 'a legal exercise of that silly but harmless religion which they now exercise illegally,' and a repeal of the Gavel Act, which breaks up the landed properties of Catholics by an equal division among the children, and 'has so reduced the list of the Papist nobility that all the influence of the Popish people and gentry is thrown into the hands of the clergy.' If such measures were taken, a French landing in Ireland would not produce an insurrection of fifty Papists. This toleration should at least be granted to all who had taken the new oath of allegiance, and it would contribute to sunder those who were simply Catholics from those who were the supporters of an aggressive political faction.

The Government did not altogether and decidedly adopt this view. In the beginning of the year the Catholics had presented a petition asking for relief, but it had not been favourably received. 'Their complaints,' Lord Buckingham wrote, 'extend to almost the whole of the Popery laws,' and he adds, 'it does not appear to me that they were in any degree admissible, and I presumed it would appear in the same light to his Majesty.'[1] The time, he said, was a very unfavourable one for such

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, March 4, 1778. See, too, the reply of the English Government, March 28.

measures, which might throw the country into a flame when it was more than commonly important that it should be quiet. But although the Government would have gladly postponed the question, the independent party would not acquiesce in this course, and in May the Lord Lieutenant wrote that, in consequence of the recent Bills in favour of Roman Catholics in the English House of Commons, 'measures of a similar tendency are in agitation here; but as there is a prospect of a warm opposition, particularly to the Gavelling clause, which is deemed by the gentlemen of that persuasion one of their most oppressive grievances,' it was necessary for him to receive instructions from England. His own opinion and that of the Primate was that Catholics should be put as far as circumstances would admit on a par in both kingdoms. Lord Weymouth thought this opinion a very reasonable one, but left it altogether to Buckingham to determine what relief could be prudently given.[1]

It appears, then, that the measure of relief originated not with the Government, but with the independent members of Parliament, but it is also certain that the Government readily accepted and warmly supported it. Lord North, in the debate on Irish commerce, had taken occasion to say a few sympathising words in favour of the Catholics, and when Mr. Gardiner introduced his Bill in 1778, members attached to the Government were ready to assist him. No detailed report of the debates exists, but we know that Yelverton, who was one of the ablest of the party which on national questions supported the views of Grattan, took a leading part in preparing the Bill and that Grattan himself spoke in its favour.[2] Lord Buckingham's secretary writes

[1] May 24 1778, Buckingham to Weymouth. May 31, 1778, Weymouth to Buckingham.

[2] Plowden, i. 463. Grattan's *Life*, i. 289.

that 'a general inclination to give relief to the Roman Catholics' was expressed in Parliament, 'but there was a variety of opinion both as to the mode and as to the extent. The great question of division was whether Catholics should be permitted to purchase land in freehold or should only be allowed to take land at leases of 999 years. The latter was carried by 111 to 108, and, although it was now one in the morning, those who desired to restrict the Catholic concessions were so encouraged by the division that they desired still to continue the debate; but the Government, in the interest of the Catholics, carried an adjournment by a majority of three.

A new and very serious difficulty, however, was produced by a clause for relieving the Presbyterians from the test, which was introduced by Sir Edward Newenham, a member who afterwards showed a strong desire to strengthen the democratic element in the constitution. As the sacramental test had originally been introduced into Ireland in a Popery Bill, there was a manifest propriety in relieving the Dissenters in this manner as well as at this time; but the Government, who looked upon the Presbyterians as pre-eminently the American party, were extremely opposed to it. 'It was intended,' the secretary wrote, 'to oppose giving liberty to receive this clause, but it being urged, even by the servants of the Crown, that the refusing to hear what might be said in favour of that considerable body of his Majesty's subjects would be an aggravation of what they deemed a grievance, the motion was suffered to pass.' 'It appears that this question respecting the test will occasion very great difficulties, as many people seem inclined to the measure.'[1]

The debates appear to have been very animated.

[1] Sir R. Heron to the English Government (the address not specified), June 17, 1778.

They were prolonged for several nights, and lasted till two or three in the morning. It was agreed that the Catholics in taking a 999 years' lease, should pay a money rent; but as its amount was not specified, it might be merely nominal. The Test Clause was supported partly by the genuine friends of the Presbyterians, and partly by a small body of whom Lord Shannon and Lord Ely were the leaders, who were hostile to the whole Bill, and who imagined that the new clause would introduce such an element of dissension that it would be wrecked; but the House of Commons passed the Bill with the additional clause. In the Irish Privy Council some members objected to the whole Bill, and others to the clause in favour of the Dissenters, but neither section was sufficiently numerous to divide. 'I must, however, give it as my opinion,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'that a much greater number would have appeared against the Presbyterian clause if they had not conceived that it might be more properly rejected in England.' 'If the Bill is returned to us,' Pery at this time wrote to Burke, 'with the Test Clause, it will not meet with any opposition in our House, but it will be in much danger in the Lords. If it be without the clause, the fate of it will be uncertain in our House, and it is feared that the rejection of it, though a matter of no real benefit, will raise a dangerous flame in the north.' The English Privy Council sent back the Bill, shorn of its concession to the Presbyterians, and the enemies of the Catholics hoped that the Irish House of Commons would be so exasperated at the mutilation that they would reject the whole measure. They acted, however, more wisely, and the first great relief Bill for the Irish Catholics was carried through the Commons by 127 to 89, through the Lords by 44 to 28.[1]

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, June 20, 25. Weymouth to Buckingham, July 24. Heron to English Government, Aug. 5,

It enabled the Catholics, on taking the oath of allegiance and a prescribed form of declaration, to hold leases of land for 999 years, though they might not purchase the freehold, and also to inherit land in exactly the same way as Protestants. The eldest son was no longer to be tempted to conform in order to secure the heritage; the properties of those who refused to conform were no longer to be broken up by compulsory division; and the great temptations which the old law had held out to profligacy and undutiful conduct in Catholic families were abolished. Any child could no longer, by conformity, secure a maintenance from his father's estate, and the eldest son could no longer make his father a mere tenant for life and mortgage his property without his consent. Converts to Popery, however, and converts to Protestantism who had relapsed, were exempted from the benefit of the law. The preamble emphatically acknowledged 'the uniform peaceable behaviour' of the Catholics 'for a long series of years,' and expressed the desire of the Legislature 'that all denominations should enjoy the blessings of our free constitution.' [1]

The Act gave much and promised more, and making every allowance for the great influence Government habitually exercised, and also for the strong opposition which some portions of the measure undoubtedly encountered, the conduct of the Irish Parliament in passing it by so large a majority shows a very marked advance in the spirit of toleration. Burke, who was at this time corresponding actively with Pery in favour of the Catholics, was much struck with the improvement. 'The Irish House of Commons,' he wrote, 'has done

1778. *Irish Monitor*, April 1878, pp. 191–192. The account in Plowden is not accurate, and he seems not to have been aware that the test clause was passed by the Irish Commons.

[1] 17 & 18 Geo. III. c. 49.

itself infinite honour. . . . It gave me great pleasure to find, as I do from many accounts, that without derogating from the talents of the gentlemen who dissented from the Toleration Act, the far greater weight of the abilities and eloquence of the House was on the side where eloquence and ability ought ever to be—on the side of liberty and justice.' 'You are now,' he continued, 'beginning to have a country, and . . . I am persuaded that when that thing called a country is once formed in Ireland, quite other things will be done than were done whilst the zeal of men was turned to the safety of a party, and whilst they thought its interests provided for in the distress and destruction of everything else.'[1] Outside the House the concession to the Catholics created no serious discontent among the Irish Protestants. As far as I have discovered, the Corporation of Cork alone petitioned against the Bill when it was proceeding, and it seems to have been universally acquiesced in when it had passed. Two years later the small relief which was granted to the English Catholics convulsed both England and Scotland with agitation, and London itself was for three days almost in the power of an anti-Catholic mob.

[1] Burke to Pery, Aug. 12, 1778.

CHAPTER IV.

1778–1782.

THE modification of the Commercial Code and of the Popery Code is sufficient to make the year 1778 very memorable in Irish history. Another movement, however, which was even more important in its immediate consequences, may be dated from the same year. I mean, of course, the creation of the Irish Volunteers.

We have seen that in every war which had taken place since the Revolution, Ireland had been an assistance and not an embarrassment to England, and that, whatever may have been the faults of the Irish Parliament—and they were many and great—the English Government, at least, had no reason to complain of any want of alacrity, or earnestness, or liberality in supporting the military establishments. This, however, was partly due to the disturbed, half-civilised, and half-organised condition of the country, which had given its ascendant class a peculiar aptitude and taste for military life, and which at the same time made the presence of a considerable armed force necessary for its security. Outrages like those of the Whiteboys, the Oakboys, and the Steelboys could not be otherwise repressed, and in the wilder parts of the country soldiers were often required to discharge ordinary police functions. It was an old complaint that in time of war Ireland had often been left almost unprotected, and it was an old desire of

the country gentlemen that a permanent militia should be organised which would be less expensive than regular troops, and equally efficient in maintaining internal tranquillity.

Bills to this effect more than once passed the Irish House of Commons. Lord Townshend, though seeing some difficulties in the way of the scheme, was disposed to recommend it,[1] but nothing in his time was done. When the war with France appeared inevitable, the question of a militia revived, and a Bill creating such a force was carried, and returned from England; but it was not put in force. Financial difficulties, the lateness of the season, hopes that the French danger might pass away, fears lest the militia might interfere with recruiting for the army, and, perhaps, jealousy of a purely national force, appear to have been the principal motives of the delay, and when the war actually broke out, Ireland found herself almost absolutely without the means of maintaining tranquillity at home, or of repelling a foreign invasion. The English fleet was occupied elsewhere, and the Irish coast was unprotected. It was said that little more than a third part of the 12,000 men who were considered necessary for the defence of the country were actually there, and they

[1] 'A militia scheme for 5,000 men has been proposed in Parliament here. It will cost the public about 20,000*l.* in the two years. Our not opposing this measure had this good effect, that it brought the country gentlemen to our assistance in restraining the money grants.'—Townshend to Weymouth, Nov. 24, 1769. In October 1770, he decidedly recommends the scheme, and says: 'The case appears to me very different between a militia in Great Britain and Ireland. In the former the difficulty has arisen from the officers, from the provincial disputes, and other causes which affect them. In Ireland the difficulty, in the south especially, will be to find the men, for as to the officers, there are so many gentlemen upon half-pay who have served, and the situation of the landed Protestants is so peculiar, that there can be little doubt but, upon proper encouragement, a militia here would soon be officered.'

were concentrated chiefly in one or two encampments. The treasury was empty, and Government was, therefore, utterly unable to form a militia. In April 1778, Lord Buckingham wrote with great urgency that it was the general sense of the House of Commons, of the Lords of the Council, and of all degrees of people in Ireland, that in case of invasion, or apprehended invasion, either a militia, or independent companies of volunteers, were absolutely necessary for the protection of the country.

But the Government, with the best intentions, was utterly unable to discharge the primary duty of securing the country. Its poverty was such that it was found necessary to borrow 20,000*l.* from La Touche's Bank, and all salaries and pensions, all civil and military grants, were suspended. A militia was impossible, for there were no means of supporting it, but 'several gentlemen of considerable property declared in the House of Commons that they would, if authorised, raise, without loss of time, independent companies, formed out of their respective tenantries, of men upon whom they could depend.'

Buckingham recommended that such companies should be raised under royal sign manual, the Government providing the arms, accoutrements, and pay; but it was soon found that even this, though much less expensive than a militia, was financially impossible. Meanwhile privateers were beginning to swarm around the coast. The communications even with England were greatly obstructed, and rumours of invasion increased. Parliament was in recess, and Government feared to assemble it. All through the country, but especially in the maritime towns, there was terror and insecurity, and it became evident that as Government was completely paralysed, as the Executive could do nothing for the defence of the country, the greatest disasters were

to be feared unless the gentry took the matter into their own hands and acted very much as if Government had been dissolved.[1]

They were fortunately peculiarly well fitted to do so, and the strong feudal attachment which in spite of many faults on both sides, and many causes of discord and antagonism, still subsisted over the greater part of Ireland between the landlords and the tenants, enabled them with very little difficulty to summon a large force. The number of Irishmen who had served in the last war was extremely great, and there was no want of old soldiers who were quite capable of marshalling the recruits.[2] It had been a common custom, when soldiers were wanted in Ireland to commission great proprietors to raise them; and Lord Aldborough, Lord Bellamont, Lord Drogheda, Sir James Caldwell, and several other large proprietors, had raised considerable forces for the Crown. In 1760, when Thurot had effected a landing on the Irish coast, the rapidity with which the northern peasantry could organise themselves for self-defence was strikingly displayed. Lord Charlemont, as governor of the county, hastened to the scene of the invasion, and he found that more than 2,000 men, armed for the most part with the weapon called in Scotland the Lochaber axe—a scythe fixed longitudinally to the end of a long pole—had already assembled around Belfast, formed themselves into regular bodies, chosen their own officers, and, without the smallest tumult or riot or drunkenness,

[1] Buckingham to North, April 21, 1778. Charlemont's *Autobiography*. Most of the more important Government letters relating to this period have been printed in Grattan's *Life*, i. 296–391.

[2] Hely Hutchinson, in a book published in 1779, stated that the number of Irishmen serving in the fleets and armies of Great Britain in the last war was computed at 100,000.—*Commercial Restraints*, p. 236. Of the troops on the Irish establishment Charlemont estimated that about half had before the augmentation been usually on foreign service.—Charlemont's *Autobiography*.

organised the defence of the town. The impression the scene made on his mind was not forgotten amid the dangers of 1778, and it was remembered that the Duke of Bedford in his speech from the throne had eulogised in warm terms the spirit shown on this occasion by the people, and had attributed it solely to their firm attitude that the French had not advanced beyond the walls of Carrickfergus.[1] In the Whiteboy agitation a similar spirit had been shown, and large bodies of volunteers organised by the country gentry had done much to pacify the disturbed districts and hunt down the marauders. Now, again, in the face of a still more pressing danger, associations for defence were everywhere formed among the Irish gentry. Official news having come about this time that a French invasion of Belfast was imminent, the mayor asked for troops for its protection; but it was answered that only half a troop of dismounted horsemen and half a company of invalids could be spared to defend the capital of Ulster.

The people at once flew to arms. A sudden enthusiasm, such as occurs two or three times in the history of a nation, seems to have passed through all classes. All along the coast associations for self-defence were formed under the direction of the leading gentry. They elected their officers, purchased their arms and accoutrements, assembled regularly under the direction of old soldiers to acquire military discipline, and without any legal obligation submitted themselves to the rules of a strict discipline. The chief persons in Ireland nearly everywhere placed themselves at the head of the movement. The Duke of Leinster commanded the Dublin corps; Lord Altamont that of the county Mayo; Lord Charlemont that of the county of Armagh; and in most counties the principal landlords appeared at the head of

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, i. 112-116.

bodies of their tenants. Large private subscriptions were raised to purchase accoutrements, and great sacrifices were made. The Catholics were not yet enrolled, but they subscribed liberally towards the expense. Those of the county of Limerick alone, raised 800*l.*, and those of Drogheda, Dingle, and other parts, exhibited a similar spirit.[1]

Lord Buckingham watched the rising movement with mingled sentiments, of which the most prominent was an impotent dismay. He could not deny that the volunteer movement was indispensably necessary to the security of the State; that the men who formed and guided it were the most considerable and upright in the country; that they were fulfilling with great energy and great ability a task which belonged properly to the Government, but which the Government was entirely unable to accomplish. On the other hand, he could not but look with alarm on a great body of armed men, rising up altogether independently of the Government at a time when so many causes and elements of discontent were circulating through the nation.

His confidential correspondence with the Government reveals the situation more clearly than any description I could give, and shows at once the character of the volunteers and the real sentiments of the Government. In December 1778, he wrote to Weymouth, describing the condition of affairs, how when war with France had become inevitable he found it impossible, in the condition of the finances, to raise troops for the protection of the country, how the scheme of raising a militia seemed to him equally impracticable, and how the idea then arose among the people that they must associate to defend themselves. 'Several of them,' he says, 'accordingly formed themselves into troops and companies, and

[1] Grattan's *Life*, i. 343.

applications were made to me to supply them with arms and ammunition. Though they consisted of Protestants, in general under the direction of persons of distinction, uniformly professing that they had nothing in view but the defence of their properties, . . . and though similar associations were formed during the Government of Lord Harcourt, in order to oppose the violence of the Whiteboys, . . . I could not comply with any request of this nature, such associations, however justifiable in extreme dangers, not being allowable by law. I have made it my constant care to inquire into their conduct, and have not found that any bad consequence followed from it; on the contrary, they have contributed to the preservation of the public peace, and being persuaded that any efforts of Government here to stop their proceedings, . . . without making any other provision for the defence of the kingdom, might have made impressions of a dangerous tendency, I did not attempt to suppress them. I now find that these associations are spreading into the internal part of the kingdom.'[1]

About six months later he wrote a very curious letter which clearly shows his dread of the new body, and his desire to suppress it at the very time when it was confessedly discharging duties of the first importance to the State. 'Upon receiving,' he says, 'official intelligence that the enemy meditated an attack upon the northern parts of Ireland, the inhabitants of Belfast and Carrickfergus, as Government could not immediately afford a greater force for their protection than about sixty troopers, armed themselves, and by degrees formed themselves into two or three companies; the spirit diffused itself into different parts of the kingdom, and the numbers became considerable, but in no degree to the amount represented. Discouragement has, how-

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, Dec. 12, 1778.

ever, been given on my part as far as might be without offence, at a crisis when the arm and goodwill of every individual might have been wanting for the defence of the State. In the interior and remote parts of Ireland, where magistrates are scarce, and those few act with reluctance and timidity, the mode of suppressing them would have been difficult and delicate. . . . Protestants might with some plausibility have murmured if they had not been indulged in arming in their own defence, at the moment when the Legislature was holding out protection to a denomination of men whom they so long had deemed their inveterate enemies. Those who arraign this proceeding do not consider that without this force the camps could not have been formed, or the interior country must have been abandoned to riot and confusion, and many parts of the coast left defenceless. . . . By the Act of the 1st of William and Mary, c. 1, sec. 2, the subjects of Ireland may carry arms for their own defence, . . . and it would be a question of nice decision to determine whether they might not be justified at a time of declared public danger in learning the use of them. The seizing their arms would have been a violent expedient, and the preventing them from assembling, without a military force, impracticable. . . . My accounts state the number of the corps as not exceeding 8,000 men, some without arms, and in the whole very few who are liable to a suspicion of disaffection.'[1]

The disquietude of the Lord Lieutenant may be easily understood. The utter paralysis of Government, the refusal of the English Parliament to grant the free trade which was indispensable to Ireland, the close affinity between the American cause and that of Ireland, the profound and justifiable discontent at the present

[1] Grattan's *Life*, i. 349.

condition of Ireland which pervaded all classes, and the creation of a great army, which was a manifest expression of the Protestant sentiment of the country, and which could not be managed or controlled like a parliament of boroughmongers, were all sufficiently alarming. In November 1778, an address to the Irish, bearing the name of Benjamin Franklin, and pointing out the close connection between American and Irish interests, was widely circulated.[1] In the following February the sheriffs of Dublin represented to the Lord Lieutenant that in that city alone more than 19,000 persons connected with the weaving trade, besides many other poor, were on the brink of starvation, and that nothing but an 'extension of trade and a free export of their manufactures' could save them.[2] In April a great meeting was held in Dublin, at which all present pledged themselves not directly or indirectly to purchase any of the goods or manufactures of Great Britain that could be manufactured at home.

'It concerns me greatly,' wrote Buckingham, when reporting this meeting, 'to mention that the discontent of this kingdom seems increasing, fomented, I apprehend, by French and American emissaries. The alarms given by some are certainly exaggerated, but still the general appearance is serious,'[3] and if the present session of the English Parliament closed without some favour to Ireland, a formidable opposition might be expected when the Irish Parliament met.[4] He notices the 'insinuations which are daily circulated in the public prints, that the idea of the number of the volunteers may conduce to the attainment of political advantages for their country.'[5] He speaks of 'how very little is

[1] Nov. 4, 1778 (Record Office).
[2] Feb. 25, 1779 (ibid.)
[3] Buckingham to Weymouth, April 29, 1779.
[4] May 24, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.
[5] May 23, 1779. Ibid.

known of the interior and remote parts of this kingdom, and how difficult it is to obtain intelligence that may be depended on.' Having made it a rule from the beginning to decline giving any sanction or encouragement to the volunteers, 'it has seldom happened,' he says, 'that I have known anything of the associations until I saw them in the public newspapers. . . . Delicately circumstanced as Ireland is at present, it is scarcely possible in my situation to avoid censure for having said or done either too much or too little.'[1]

He called upon the leading Irishmen, both in and out of office, to send him in writing their views of the cause of the great atrophy which had undoubtedly fallen on Irish prosperity, and Lord Lifford, Sir L. O'Brien, Flood, Burgh, Foster, Pery, Hely Hutchinson, and several others, sent in the reports, to which I have already referred, describing the condition of the country, and all concluding that, unless the commercial restrictions were speedily removed, Ireland could no longer pay her way. The English Government consented that England should pay all the Irish troops which were at this time serving out of Ireland; but the boon, though at other times it might have been much appreciated, had now no considerable effect. Buckingham himself urged that the drain of money from Ireland to England, in the shape of rents of absentees, interest of mortgages, and of the national debt, pensions, and lucrative offices held by Englishmen, 'will appear enormous in proportion to the most exaggerated estimate of the abilities of this kingdom;' that of late years 'the expense of collection from various causes is most seriously augmented;' that Irish farmers having no capital were ruined by the slightest check, and that in his private opinion—which he had, however, carefully concealed

[1] June 4, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.

in Ireland—'nothing short of permission to export coarse woollen goods will in any degree give general satisfaction.' [1]

From that memorable year when the English barons availed themselves of the destruction of an English army by the French near the bridge of Bouvines, to rise against their sovereign and to extort from him the great charter of English liberty, there had been many instances of the pressure of foreign affairs being employed to obtain concessions of civil liberty. Something of this kind was, no doubt, occurring in Ireland. The Irish Protestants, who were rapidly rising everywhere to arms, were determined, while defending their country as a member of the British Empire, to insist upon the abolition of the trade restrictions which had destroyed its prosperity, and another and still higher object was rapidly strengthening among them. The doctrine that self-government is the characteristic feature of English liberty, that Ireland, though subject to the King of England, was not subject to the English Parliament, that no laws were valid in Ireland which had not been made exclusively by the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland—this doctrine was now rapidly becoming the dominant creed of the country. The American discussions had done much to convince all classes of Protestants that it was essential to their liberty, essential if they were to be permanently secured from taxation by a body in which they were wholly unrepresented, essential if they were to maintain any commercial liberty in the face of the great commercial jealousy of English industries. It had been, as we have seen, the doctrine of a long series of Irish antiquaries that the English settlers in Ireland had originally possessed a constitution in all respects similar to that of England, and that Poyning's

[1] May 28, June 8, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.

law was the first of a series of encroachments which had been ratified and consummated by the Declaratory Act of George I. The right of Ireland to parliamentary independence had been unanimously asserted by the Irish Parliament of 1641; it had been a leading topic in the Remonstrance presented by the Irish Catholics to the Commissioners of Charles I. in 1642, and in the negotiation of the Catholic Confederates for peace in 1645,[1] and it was reiterated in emphatic terms by the Parliament of James II., convened at Dublin in 1689. On the ruin of the Catholics, the banner which dropped from their hands was caught up by Protestants. The doctrine of the legitimate independence of the Irish Parliament passed from Molyneux to Swift, from Swift to Lucas, from Lucas to Flood. It was strongly asserted in the writings of Henry Brooke. It was clearly though less strongly intimated by Sir James Caldwell. It was the first principle of the policy of Charlemont; and the eloquence of Grattan, assisted by the example of America, and by the spirit of independence which the sense of power naturally gives, was rapidly preparing its triumph. It had become a leading topic in the press,[2] and made daily converts among all classes.

At the same time the volunteer body was essentially and ardently loyal, and Buckingham fully admitted that there was not the smallest disposition among them to detach

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[1] Irish Commons' *Journals*, July 26, 1641. Carte's *Ormond*, i. 545, Appendix No. 1. Curry's *Civil Wars*, ii. 337. See, too, Monck Mason's *Essay on the Antiquity and Constitution of Parliaments in Ireland*, p. 56.

[2] See especially two very remarkable series of letters in its defence, which were reprinted in a separate form under the signatures of Guatimozin and of Owen Roe O'Nial. Dr. Jebb, who was the author of the former, soon after sold himself to the Government for a pension of 300*l.* a year, and became one of the most active ministerial writers. See Grattan's *Life*, ii. 175, 192. The letters of O'Nial are by a writer named Pollock.

themselves from the English Crown, that there was no question that they would exert themselves to the utmost in repelling invasion, and that they were in truth rendering a great service to the Empire. They alone, in a time when the danger of invasion was extremely great, made Ireland defensible. They had liberated for the defence of the Empire large bodies of troops who must otherwise have been scattered over the country. They had greatly relieved the public treasury, and they were discharging with admirable ability and success the difficult task of maintaining public order. A great part of Ireland was so uncivilised that criminals could only be arrested and carried to execution by soldiers. There were whole districts where the law was almost inoperative, and it was a common thing for prisoners to be rescued as they were carried to prison, by men who were perfect strangers to them and who knew nothing more of them than that they were in duress.[1] It was the just boast of the Irish patriots that at no period of Irish history was internal tranquillity so fully preserved or the law so strictly obeyed as between the rise of the volunteers and the close of the American war,[2] and the volunteers themselves maintained an admirable discipline. Men of all political opinions were enrolled in their ranks, and they appear at this time to have been guilty of absolutely no acts of violence or disorder. Some overtures to bring them under the direct control of the Government were rejected without hesitation, but they asked one thing from Government which could hardly be refused. A large number of militia arms had recently

[1] See a letter of Buckingham, Grattan's *Life*, i. 349, and a very curious pamphlet describing the lawlessness of many parts of Ireland, called *Astræa, or a Letter addressed to an Officer of the Court of Exchequer on the Abuses in H.M.'s Casual Revenues, and in the Administration of Justice in Ireland*, by an Attorney-at-Law (Dublin, 1788).

[2] Gordon's *History*, ii. 266, 267. Grattan's *Life*, i. 357. *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1160.

been provided by the Irish Parliament, and as Government were unable to call out the militia at the time when it was most needed, and as the volunteers at their own expense were discharging the duties of a militia, the Administration could hardly refuse to put these arms at their disposal.

The French and Spanish Ministers for a time hoped that matters in Ireland were tending to insurrection. In the spring of 1779 Florida Blanca wrote to Vergennes urging the necessity of attending to Irish affairs, and the French Minister answered that he had for a long time made them a matter of careful study. He believed that discontent in Ireland was extreme and universal, that an insurrection might at any time break out, and that it was the interest of France and Spain to do their utmost to support it, but secretly, without making any formal treaty with the insurgents, above all, without making any engagement which would oblige them to sustain the revolt longer than was in accordance with their own interests. The Catholics appeared to Vergennes not to have sufficient energy for insurrection, but the Presbyterians were daring, enterprising, and very hostile to the royal authority. Spain could work more effectively than France upon the Irish Catholics; but an American, who was a secret agent of Vergennes, was now starting for Ireland with instructions to move among the Presbyterians of the North, and, if possible, to persuade them to follow the example of America. Six months later, however, Vergennes wrote to Madrid about Irish matters in a more desponding tone. The Irish were merely endeavouring to free themselves from many oppressions under which they suffered, and the English Opposition were sustaining the popular movement, but there was no real desire in Ireland to separate from the Crown and Government of England, and no present prospect of advantage to foreign Powers. France

and Spain should, however, wait patiently. If the conflict in Ireland became more intense, their assistance might still be demanded.[1]

A few more extracts from the letters of Lord Buckingham will paint the situation. In May and June 1779, there were persistent alarms, which the Government thought well founded, that an immediate French invasion of Ireland was impending. Sir Lucius O'Brien, one of the members for Clare, wrote urgently in the name of the gentry of that county, asking that its militia might be arrayed and supplied with militia arms, and stating 'that they will cheerfully defray every other expense which may be necessary on this account between this time and the next Session of Parliament.' The gentry of many other counties, Sir Lucius O'Brien added, 'would offer their service upon the same terms;' but Buckingham, while forwarding this offer to the Home Government, was obliged to acknowledge that 'it would lead to a general array of the militia through the whole kingdom, which would unavoidably bring on an expense his Majesty's revenue is at this time unable to support.'[2] The Knight of Kerry offered to raise a body of troops in that county for the King's service, provided he were allowed to name the officers.[3] Lord Clanricarde wrote 'that a very large and respectable number of gentlemen in the county of Galway had formed themselves into a body for the protection of that county, and had done him the great honour of placing him at their head as Colonel, under the appellation of the Clanricarde Volunteers. . . . Should the French or any other enemy presume to land or invade this kingdom, he took the liberty of offering their services to march at their own

[1] Vergennes to Montmorin, May 29–Nov. 13, 1779. Circourt, *L'Action Commune de la France et de l'Amérique*, iii. 315–317, 318, 319.

[2] Buckingham to Weymouth, June 30, 1779.

[3] June 28, 1779.

expense to any part of the kingdom in support of Government. . . .' He will also 'engage on the shortest notice to raise amongst his friends and tenants in the county of Galway 1,000 men who will swim in their own blood in defence of his Majesty, and of their native country.' Buckingham, however, while acknowledging 'his Lordship's peculiar zeal and attachment to his Majesty's and the public service,' and while intimating that in the moment of actual invasion he might call upon his assistance, said he could not 'give any encouragement or sanction' to associations which he was informed were illegal.[1]

To the Government at home, he writes: 'The accounts of the temper and disposition of this kingdom are very differently represented in England to those which are stated to me. Commercial indulgence and general relief is universally wished for; but assurances are given us from all parts that there never has existed an era when a hostile attempt from any quarter would have been so strenuously resisted as at present.'[2] 'Hitherto,' he writes a few weeks later, 'when a truly authentic account of any of the independent companies has reached me, it has done honour as well to their dispositions as their conduct, and their numbers have fallen short of report. Applications are hourly made for arms in consequence of the late alarm, which shall in every instance be civilly refused. . . . Temporising is, in my opinion, called for, and whatever may be the sentiments of Government respecting the independent troops, most studiously to avoid giving them any reason to believe that they are either feared or suspected. Expense, fatigue, avocation from business, and subordination will, by rendering their situation irksome, thin their ranks, and a peace will soon put a period to their

[1] Grattan's *Life*, i. 354-356.

[2] May 29, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.

existence. The conduct of all denominations of men upon the rumours of last week . . . carries with it the agreeable conviction of there never having existed a period when Ireland was equally able and willing to resist any attempt of invasion.'[1]

The condition of foreign politics, however, was such that it was not possible for the Government to treat the volunteers as a wholly alien body. The fears of invasion became stronger and stronger. In June, Buckingham wrote that 'some of the most respectable noblemen of this kingdom, who are governors of counties,' represented that in case of invasion it would not be in the power of gentlemen of the country without additional arms to defend themselves, and they urgently requested that the arms prepared for the militia should be granted.[2] Soon the hostile squadron of Paul Jones, which in 1778 had already hovered around the Irish coast, and had even captured a ship of war in Belfast Lough,[3] was again seen, while a combined fleet of sixty-five French and Spanish ships entered the British Channel, insulted unopposed the British coast, and might easily have destroyed Plymouth. Ireland was in daily, almost hourly, expectation of invasion. The Government thought it necessary to issue directions about the course to be pursued if the French landed; but it could give no efficient protection by land or sea. The country was left almost destitute of English troops. The volunteers, and the volunteers alone, were there. Their numbers under the pressure of imminent danger had risen to about 42,000, and they were rapidly acquiring the discipline of regular soldiers. It was felt under such circumstances that the responsibility of withholding the arms that were lying idle was overwhelming, and, upon the urgent advice of

[1] June 12, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.

[2] June 25, 1779.

[3] In April 1778. Benn's *History of Belfast*, p. 620.

the Irish Privy Council, 16,000 stand of militia arms were distributed among the volunteers.[1]

The year was one of the most agitated Ireland had ever known. Internally, indeed, there was no real disloyalty, though there was much discontent; but all classes were looking forward to the necessity of defending their country from invasion. France and Spain were now united against England, while a great part of the British army was imprisoned in America. The Catholics exhibited on this occasion a spirit of warm gratitude for the favour that had last year been shown them, and seem to have done all in their power to assist the Government. Addresses poured in from them, expressive of the most unbounded loyalty and the most lively gratitude for the Relief Bill of 1778. In May, Lord Tyrone wrote to the Government that they were forming independent companies to defend the coast against invasion; but that, though he was convinced that the measure was well intended, it was one which would be sure 'to raise such a noise at this and the other side of the water as must distress Government;' and he accordingly persuaded their leaders to desist from their intention, and to offer, in an address to the Government, to co-operate in case of invasion with the Protestant inhabitants, in any way the Government should point out.[2] The Catholics of Waterford and of

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1040. Grattan's *Life*, i. 366–368, 399. Gordon's *Hist.* ii. 266.

[2] May 28, 1779 (Irish State Paper Office). Many loyal Catholic addresses of this time are in the Irish State Paper Office. Weymouth wrote to Buckingham, Aug. 4, 1779, that he had received information that a considerable number of Roman Catholic priests were passing from the Continent to Ireland, and that 'seminaries in France and Flanders have been directed to send many of their pupils to Ireland to promote the views of the French Court. The zeal which the Roman Catholics of Ireland have shown leaves no reason to doubt their loyalty, yet it may be very proper to acquaint privately some of the principal gentlemen of that persuasion of these facts.' Buckingham an-

Limerick subscribed largely to the volunteers, and also for additional bounties to those who would enlist in the King's troops;[1] while O'Leary, the most brilliant writer of the sect, published a not very skilful address to the common people exhorting them to loyalty, and intimating his hope that they might be allowed to share with Protestants in the defence of their country.[2]

The Volunteer movement was spreading rapidly over all parts of the country. Nearly the whole resident landed gentry took part in it, and a large proportion of the foremost names in Ireland may be found among its leaders. Volunteer rank became an object of ambition; ladies gave it precedence in society, and to be at the head of a well-appointed corps was now the highest distinction of an Irish gentleman. Great efforts of self-sacrifice were made to obtain the funds necessary to keep the force together, to maintain without any assistance from the civil power a high standard of discipline, to preserve this great body of armed men from all crime and violence and disorder. Never before in Ireland had public opinion shown itself so strong, so earnest, and so relf-reliant. A sincere loyalty to the Crown, and a firm resolution to defend the country from invasion, were blended with a resolute determination to maintain a distinctively Irish policy; and it was soon noticed that even among the poorer farmers there was a marked improvement in dress, cleanliness, and self-respect.[3] Agreements to use only domestic

swered that he had only been able to find that two priests had lately come into the kingdom, and that they had come to fill vacant cures. Grattan's *Life*, i. 370.

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, June 4, 1779. *Munster Journal*, Aug. 23, 1779.

[2] O'Leary's *Works* (Boston, 1868), pp. 129–139.

[3] Dobbs's *History of Irish Affairs, from Oct.* 12, 1779, *to Sept.* 15, 1782. Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ch. iii. Shelburne, in the English House of Lords, at this time described the volunteers in

manufactures, and to abstain from purchasing English goods till the commercial restrictions were removed, were now entered into by the grand juries of many counties, and by numerous county meetings, and were signed in most of the great towns. Ladies of high social position set the example. The scarlet, green, blue, and orange uniforms of the volunteers were all manufactured at home. It was proposed, in imitation of the Americans, to publish in the newspapers the names of those traders who had infringed the agreement, but this proposal, which would probably have led to much crime, was generally reprobated, and soon abandoned. Many of the counties sent up urgent instructions to their representatives, enjoining them not to vote any Money Bill for more than six months till the commercial grievances were redressed.[1]

The position of the Lord Lieutenant was both painful and embarrassing. The expense of the establishments exceeded the net produce of the revenue for the year, by more than 240,000*l.*, and yet Ireland did not obtain from those establishments the most ordinary security. Irish ships were taken within sight of her ports. But for the presence of the volunteers a hostile invasion might at any time be expected. War, restrictive laws, and the embargo on the provision trade had together destroyed almost every source of national wealth, and the northern ports of Germany, and of the other countries around the Baltic, were already making

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these terms: 'This most formidable body was not composed of mercenaries who had little or no interest in the issue, but of the nobility, gentry, merchants, citizens, and respectable yeomanry; men able and willing to devote their time and part of their property to the security of their country. The Government had been abdicated and the people resumed the powers vested in it, and in so doing were fully authorised by every principle of the constitution.'—*Parl. Hist.* xx. 1159.

[1] Oct. 18, 1779. Buckingham to Weymouth.

every effort to secure for themselves permanently the provision trade from which Ireland had been excluded. The drain of money to England still continued, and Irish revenues were still scandalously misused to provide sinecure rewards for English politicians.[1] In the meantime, while discontent was on all sides increasing, the main defence of the country rested with a voluntary and perhaps illegal body, which had grown up in spite of the discouragement of the Government, which lay wholly beyond its control, which had begun evidently to aim at political changes, and which was no less evidently the truest representation of the Protestants of Ireland.

Parliament was to meet in October, and Buckingham soon found that the discontent had penetrated to his confidential servants. Hussey Burgh, who was one of the most eloquent and most upright men at the Irish bar, had accepted the office of Prime Serjeant when Buckingham came to power. He had exerted his influence strenuously in favour of free trade, and he was the author of one of the ablest of the many able disquisitions on the condition of the country which had just been drawn up at the request of the Government. He resented bitterly the inadequacy of the Commercial Bill of 1778; he now refused to attend a meeting of the confidential servants of the Crown, and in December he resigned his office. Flood was equally marked in his hostility, but while refusing to attend the confidential meetings, he retained, by a great fault of judgment, his post of Vice-Treasurer, and the Government did not as yet expel him. His motives

[1] Rockingham, in 1779, gave an extraordinary instance of the utter recklessness with which Irish patronage was bestowed even at a time when the necessities of the country were most extreme. The sinecure office of Clerk of the Pells had just been increased from 2,300*l.* to 3,500*l.* a year, and given to Jenkinson, the English Secretary of War, *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1175.

can only be a matter of conjecture. He may have clung to the political influence attached to a seat in the Privy Council, or have regarded his sinecure of Vice-Treasurer as external to party politics, or have been misled by the examples of Pitt, Grenville, and other English statesmen who had opposed Government when in office, or have desired as a political move to compel the ministers to dismiss him. That he was actuated by any sordid love of money is scarcely probable, for in that case he would not have taken a line of policy which exposed him to almost certain dismissal.

When Parliament met, Grattan, in a speech of great eloquence, moved an amendment to the address, urging the absolute necessity of 'a free export trade,' if the country was to be saved from ruin, and it was evident that he carried with him the sense of the House. Burgh, though still Prime Serjeant, rose, and moved that the terms of the amendment should be 'free export and import,' and Flood that it should be simply 'free trade,' and in this last form it was carried without a division. An attempt to adjourn the question by submitting it to a committee was indeed moved, but speedily rejected. The Chief Secretary expressed his strong dissent from the terms of the amendment to the address; but nearly the whole body of the country gentry who usually supported the Government, and even several men who were actually in office, declared that they would support it, and it was therefore thought better not to expose the Government to a crushing defeat. When the Speaker went to the Castle to present the amended address, two lines of Dublin volunteers, under the command of the Duke of Leinster, lined the way, and presented arms as he passed. Votes thanking the volunteers for 'their spirited and necessary exertions' for the defence of the country were then carried unanimously in the Commons, with two dis-

sentient voices in the Lords. The temper of the nation was such, that Buckingham declared he did not think it prudent to oppose them.[1]

The answer of the King to the address was studiously colourless and ambiguous, and it greatly increased the popular discontent. In Dublin, especially, a very dangerous spirit was abroad. On the anniversary of the birthday of William III., the Dublin volunteers paraded round his monument, which was hung on all sides with very significant inscriptions, and two cannon bore the labels, 'Free Trade—or this.' A few days later a violent riot broke out in the Liberties, and a crowd of weavers, dyers, tanners, and other workmen attacked the house of the Attorney-General, and obliged some of the members of Parliament to swear that they would vote 'for the good of Ireland, free trade, and a short Money Bill.' The Government, at the request of the House of Commons, offered a reward for the apprehension of the rioters; but the Lord Lieutenant complained that the Lord Mayor had been very remiss in repressing the disturbance. In the House of Commons the feeling against the legislative authority of the British Parliament in Ireland was so strong that even the Attorney-General found it necessary to disclaim any acknowledgment of that authority.[2] Grattan, alarmed at the violence that had been displayed, urged moderation, implored the people to abstain from any act of tumult and violence, and thus gradually to win all classes to the popular cause; but his own policy showed no signs of flinching or timidity. In the teeth of the opposition of the Government, he carried by 170 to 47 a resolution, 'that at this time it would be inexpedient to grant new taxes;' and next day, when the House re-

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, Oct. 13, 14, 1779. Grattan's *Life*, i. 383 398.

[2] Ibid. i. 397.

solved itself into a Committee of Supply, it was moved and carried by 138 to 100, that the appropriated duties should be granted for six months only. It was on this occasion that Burgh finally broke from the Government by a speech of such surpassing eloquence that the spectators who thronged the gallery burst into uncontrollable applause. Describing the condition of the country, he exclaimed, 'Talk not to me of peace—it is not peace, but smothered war. England has sown her laws in dragon's teeth, and they have sprung up in armed men.' A few days later, Burgh sent in his resignation. 'The gates of promotion,' said Grattan, 'were shut as the gates of glory opened.' [1]

Another measure of great significance was taken. The clause relieving the Dissenters from the sacramental test had in 1778 been added by a large majority to the measure for the relief of Catholics, and had been strongly opposed by the Government, and extinguished in England. It was now brought forward again as a distinct measure. The Presbyterians of the North had been the earliest and the most numerous of the volunteers, and there was a keen and general desire that they should participate in the benefits which had of late been so largely extended to the Catholics. The abolition of the test, the Lord Lieutenant confessed, 'met with a general concurrence, great numbers of those members who had opposed it last session having pledged themselves for its support in the present session.' [2] While refusing to impose new permanent taxes, Parliament at the same time granted 340,000*l.*, chiefly by a lottery, for discharging arrears.

Buckingham, thoroughly alarmed at the condition of the country, strongly counselled the ministers to yield.

[1] Buckingham to Weymouth, Nov. 6, 8, 16, 25, 1779. Grattan's *Life*, i. 399–403.

[2] Buckingham to Weymouth Dec. 2, 1779.

The evils of free trade to Great Britain must indeed be great, he significantly said, if they overbalanced those which she might incur from the present resentment of Ireland against the commercial restrictions. Lord North, as we have seen, had been already disposed to grant a very liberal measure of commercial relief to Ireland, though he proposed to except the capital article of the wool trade; but he had been intimidated by the clamour of the manufacturers in England. Now, however, the danger was too extreme for further delay. The fear of bankruptcy in Ireland, the non-importation agreements which were beginning to tell upon English industries, the threatening aspect of an armed body which already counted more than 40,000 men, the determined and unanimous attitude of the Irish Parliament, the prediction of the Lord Lieutenant that all future military grants by Ireland depended upon the course that was now adopted, the danger that England, in the midst of a great and disastrous war, should be left absolutely without a friend, all weighed upon the English Minister; and, at the close of 1779, and in the beginning of 1780, measures were carried in England which exceeded the utmost that a few years before the most sanguine Irishman could have either expected or demanded. The Acts which prohibited the Irish from exporting their woollen manufactures and their glass were wholly repealed, and the great trade of the colonies was freely thrown open to them. It was enacted that all goods that might be legally imported from the British settlements in America and Africa to Great Britain might be in like manner imported directly from those settlements into Ireland, and that all goods which might be legally exported from Great Britain into those settlements, might in like manner be exported from Ireland, on the sole condition that duties equal to those paid in British ports were imposed by the

Irish Parliament on the imports and exports of Ireland. The Acts which prohibited carrying gold and silver coin into Ireland were repealed. The Irish were allowed to import foreign hops, and to receive a drawback on the duty on British hops. They were allowed to become members of the Turkey Company, and to carry on a direct trade between Ireland and the Levant Sea.[1]

Thus fell to the ground that great system of commercial restriction which began under Charles II., which under William III. acquired a crushing severity, and which had received several additional clauses in the succeeding reigns. The measures of Lord North, though obviously due in a great measure to intimidation and extreme necessity, were at least largely, wisely, and generously conceived, and they were the main sources of whatever material prosperity Ireland enjoyed during the next twenty years. The English Parliament had been accustomed to grant a small bounty—rising in the best years to 13,000*l.*—on the importation into England of the plainer kinds of Irish linen. After the immense concessions made to Irish trade, no one could have complained if this bounty had been withdrawn; but North determined to continue it. He showed that it had been of real use to the Irish linen manufacture, and he strongly maintained that the prosperity of Ireland must ultimately prove a blessing to England.[2]

After a long period of hesitation and delay, the other capital demand of the Irish Parliament was conceded. In March 1780, the Bill relieving the Irish Dissenters from the sacramental test was returned from England, and a very curious page in Irish ecclesiastical history was thus terminated. The first imposition of the sacramental test was, as we have seen, wholly due to the English Ministers, who forced it on the Irish Parliament

[1] 20 Geo. III. c. 6, 10, 18. [2] *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1275, 1282.

by adding a clause to that effect to the Anti-Popery Bill of 1704. A generation later the parts were inverted. The English Whig ministers of George II. wished to abolish the Irish test, but they found insuperable obstacles in the anti-Presbyterian feeling of the Irish House of Commons, and in the preponderance of bishops in the Irish House of Lords. Now, at last, under a Tory King and a Tory ministry, at a time when the Church was in the height of its power in England, and when the Presbyterians were looked upon with more than common disfavour, the sacramental test was abolished at the request of the Irish Parliament, and by the influence of the volunteers. The Irish Dissenters were thus placed politically on a level with their fellow-countrymen, and they obtained this boon forty-eight years before a similar favour was granted to their co-religionists in England.

The aspect of affairs in Ireland still appeared very alarming to the Government. Buckingham seems to have been severely blamed for having allowed the volunteer movement to attain its present formidable height, and his letters are full of exculpations of his conduct. He maintained, with much truth, that, in the financial condition of Ireland, it was impossible to avoid it; that the alternative was to leave the country a prey to complete internal anarchy and to the first invader who chose to land on its unprotected shore, or to suffer it to defend itself; that the volunteer movement in its beginning was intended solely to protect the country from invasion; and that it was in a great degree in consequence of encouragement from England that it was afterwards turned to home politics. At the same time, he had no illusion about the gravity of the situation. 'It may be rather too much,' he wrote, 'to advance that there was a general concert among the principal gentlemen of Ireland to alarm Great Britain into the present very ju-

dicious measures. Yet had you seen the complexion of Parliament the first day of the sessions, and heard the language since held with respect to the Money Bill, you might have judged such a suspicion not altogether ill founded.'[1] 'The distressed state of this kingdom . . . has diffused a spirit unknown before. At this time the attention of the whole nation is fixed upon parliamentary proceedings, and not only the electors are instructed that their opinions are to determine the suffrages of members, whose sentiments cannot be openly canvassed as formerly when the contest was merely between different factions. Beyond a certain line you cannot press for the intended conduct of independent gentlemen, and even positive assurances may not be able to resist popular clamour. . . . The Octennial Bill is the great source of this evil. . . . The volunteer companies continue attentive to their exercise. Those who should know assure me that a considerable majority are well disposed. . . . You cannot doubt of my anxiety to reduce them into some legal shape, and that no pains shall be omitted to effect it.' 'Upon the whole, it is my private opinion, that, barring insurrection, or something nearly resembling it, I shall go through the business of the session with success. The conduct of some of your English counties may be inconveniently infectious; but, hitherto, the Irish have been more discreet.'[2]

Up to this time the volunteers had been detached bands raised by local efforts for local defence, but great exertions were now made to give them the coherence and consistency of a regular army. In the beginning of 1780, arrangements were made for a number of reviews in the ensuing summer, in which the volunteers of many different districts might act in great masses together. A few cannon now belonged to the force,

[1] Jan. 2, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough (secret).

[2] Feb. 6, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough.

and great pains were taken to bring its discipline to perfection. Reviewing generals and exercising officers were chosen, and among the former Lord Charlemont was the most active.[1] At the same time the doctrine that armed men lost their right of discussing political questions was emphatically repudiated, and the newspapers were full of resolutions passed by different corps through the country.

Many men of weight, property, and character were beginning to look upon the development of the force with alarm, and to doubt whether it would be possible to restrain it within legal limits; and in Dublin, at least, a more highly accentuated democratic tendency was beginning to appear. 'Very limited, indeed,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'is the number of men of property who are not anxious to stifle ill humour, but the temper of the inferior orders is certainly in an unpleasing state of fermentation.'[2] The Duke of Leinster, who had been hitherto so prominent, began to fluctuate or to change, declared in Parliament that 'he had no idea of constitutional questions being forced by the bayonet,' and for some time gave his influence to the Government.[3] There was much agitation among the Dublin volunteers about this defection, and Napper Tandy, who was now beginning to emerge as a democratic agitator, moved that the Duke should be expelled, and was himself expelled in consequence.[4] In Parliament, measures were brought in for securing the seats of the judges during good behaviour, and for extending the Habeas Corpus Act to Ireland, and the Government as usual refrained from opposing

[1] *History of Irish Affairs from Oct.* 12, 1779, *to Sept.* 15, 1782, by Francis Dobbs. Plowden's *Historical Register*, i. 513.

[2] March 8, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough (private).

[3] March 2, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough. See this despatch in Grattan's *Life*, ii. 24–26.

[4] April 24, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough.

them, leaving it to the Council in England to reject them. An old project of raising the number of judges from nine to twelve was introduced by the Government in spite of the almost desperate condition of the finances; but it was so unfavourably received that it was speedily withdrawn.

The notion that a legislative union was the only safe solution of the present difficulties appears at this time to have been widely disseminated,[1] and to have been favoured by Hillsborough;[2] but he received no encouragement from the Lord Lieutenant. 'I shall ever receive with the most grateful acknowledgment,' wrote Buckingham, 'any hints from you either respecting myself immediately or the business of the public. But let me earnestly recommend to you not to utter the word Union in a whisper or to drop it from your pen. The present temper will not bear it.'[3] Extreme circumspection in word and action, and a careful reservation of their strength for the great constitutional questions that were impending, was the policy of the ministers. An embargo, to arrest some provisions from Cork, which were supposed to be intended to supply the French fleet, appeared to the English ministers a

[1] 'The idea of an union between Great Britain and this kingdom has been industriously disseminated here.'—*The Irish Spy* (Dublin, 1779), p. 16. See, too, *A Letter to the People of Ireland on Association in favour of our Manufactures* (Dublin, 1779), and *The First Lines of Ireland's Interest in the Year* 1780 (Dublin, 1779). The last pamphlet was in defence of an union. Franklin noticed that the rumour of an intended union prevailed as early as 1773 (Franklin's *Works*, viii. 84). In 1778 it had acquired such consistency that the members for the county of Limerick received instructions from their constituents to oppose it. Grattan's *Life*, i. 399. Arthur Young about the same time, while himself advocating an union, 'was informed that nothing was so unpopular in Ireland as such an idea.'—*Tour*, i. 65.

[2] See a note to Walpole's *George III.* iv. 200.

[3] Buckingham to Hillsborough (secret), Jan. 2, 1780.

measure of the utmost importance; but to their great astonishment, the Lord Lieutenant implored them to abstain from it. The last embargo, he said, had been in force for three years, and was universally regarded as the cause of that great and long-continued distress, which had ruined so many merchants and graziers, lowered or stopped rents in all parts of the kingdom, and left innumerable farms without tenants. Any attempt to repeat such a measure would certainly produce general alarm, and would probably, in the present condition of the country, produce such dangerous disturbances that the Government was entreated as the safer course to purchase the provisions itself.[1]

At the same time, parliamentary influence was carefully collected and fostered, by the old plan of lavishing promises of peerages, baronetcies, and pensions; and in February 1780, Buckingham already writes that he had secured his majority and could count upon the general support of 154 members out of the 300. He sent Lord Hillsborough an elaborate analysis of the grounds upon which he formed his opinion, and it is exceedingly curious as illustrating the way in which, under the system of nomination boroughs, ministerial majorities were composed. Of the votes favourable to the Government, 96, according to the Lord Lieutenant, depended on the influence of twenty-three men. Lord Shannon, the Duke of Leinster, and Lord Ely, who were the three largest borough owners in Ireland, were all prepared to support him, and they could together control no less than thirty-five votes in the House of Commons. Four bishops commanded together eight votes. Hillsborough himself was a large landowner in Ireland, and five members held their seats at his disposal. Eighteen members of the majority were nominated by other peers, and Mr. Conolly, Sir R. Deane,

[1] See the *Correspondence* of Jan. and Feb. 1780.

Mr. Clements, and Sir J. Parnell, including their own votes, commanded together twenty. Of the 154 members on whose support the Lord Lieutenant counted, 78 had already either pensions or places. We shall presently see what promises had been given to stimulate their zeal.[1]

These were the forces with which the Administration undertook to meet the rising spirit of the country. The determination to resist any constitutional change was very decided. The English party, who were now in power, had fought step by step against any concession to the demands of the Americans, and had again and again pledged their reputation to the policy of enforcing the legislative authority of the British Parliament over the dependencies; and Lord Hillsborough, in whose special department Irish affairs lay, had, in the divided Cabinets of the preceding year, been one of the most determined enemies to the conciliatory policy which had been advocated by the Duke of Grafton and Lord Camden, and which might have possibly averted or postponed the disruption of the Empire.[2] His policy in Ireland was very similar, and he gave the most stringent directions 'to prevent, if possible, any propositions for innovations upon or alterations in the Constitution from being transmitted' to England.[3]

The chief strength of the opposition to the declaration of independence lay undoubtedly in corrupt influence; but there were also a few honest men and a few plausible arguments on that side. It was said that a declaration of independence would bring Ireland into violent collision with England; that a continuance of popular agitation might lead either to anarchy or to

[1] *State of the different Interests in the House of Commons, which are in the Support of Government.*

[2] See Walpole's *George III.* iv. 199.

[3] March 28, 1780. See Grattan's *Life*, ii. 31.

stratocracy; that it was ungrateful to press the constitutional question at a time when England was isolated in the world, when she was engaged in a desperate struggle against a hostile coalition, when she had just conceded to Ireland commercial boons of the amplest and most liberal character.

But such objections, though they might sound powerfully in the Parliament, were lost throughout the country in the great cry for legislative independence which rose in every county from the volunteers, from the grand juries, from the freeholders, and the yeomen of every denomination. Those who were leading the movement were not rebels and were not demagogues. They had made—they were making—they were prepared to make every effort in their power for the defence of the Empire and of the connection. They were the gentry of Ireland, and they were asking nothing more than the restoration of their ancient rights—nothing more than that political liberty which Englishmen themselves maintained to be the first of blessings. The utter paralysis of Government, and the great armed force which had in consequence arisen, at once demonstrated the necessity of a radical change in the conditions of Irish government and made it possible to effect it. Loyal men, devotedly attached to the Crown and the connection, who had strained the resources of the country to the utmost for the support of the Empire, who had borne with signal patience misgovernment of the most varied and most crushing character, who were themselves discharging by an admirable voluntary effort the neglected duties of the Government, might surely afford to bear the imputation of ingratitude if they availed themselves of the one opportunity which had arisen since the Revolution of recovering their birthright of freedom. No one, as Grattan said, should ask a man to sacrifice his conscience, or a woman her

honour, or a nation her liberty, to gratitude. It was said that the late commercial boons were a reason for not pressing for legislative independence. It was answered that without legislative independence those boons were perfectly precarious. 'The same power which took away the export of woollens and the export of glass might take them away again.' Lord North himself described the concessions to the Irish as 'resumable at pleasure.' No one who had watched the intense commercial jealousy of Irish industry which the manufacturers and commercial towns of England had so lately displayed, no one who observed how entirely the recent concessions had been due to the pressing exigencies of the moment, and how much irritation the mere demand for them had produced, could question that it was not only possible, but in a high degree probable, that in calmer times, if the English power of legislating for Ireland were still acknowledged, it would be employed in revoking every benefit that had been conceded.

These views were widely held, and they were advocated with special effect in a letter to Lord North, written in the beginning of 1780 by a very eccentric lawyer named Francis Dobbs, who had been prominent in organising the Ulster volunteers, and who became at a later period member for Charlemont. He was a man of respectable family and private means, of an eminently pure, gentle, honourable, and benevolent character, and of some literary talent, and he has left behind him among other works an 'Universal History,' in nine volumes, which is now absolutely forgotten, and a short and valuable sketch of the early history of the volunteers. On all subjects but one he was esteemed, if not a brilliant, at least a sober and well-judging man; but a vein of religious enthusiasm amounting to monomania ran through his nature and blended strangely with his politics. Unfulfilled pro-

phecy was the passion of his life, and when this chord was struck his whole being seemed suddenly changed. He had convinced himself that the present dispensation was at an end, that the Messiah was just about to descend to reign in person upon earth, and that he was first to appear in Ireland. Armagh, called in Irish Ardmaceaddon, or the Hill of the Great Teacher, was the predicted Armageddon. The sea of glass, the golden harps, the robes of linen, foreshadowed the insular position, the national arms, the national manufacture of Ireland: the Giant's Causeway was the stone of Daniel; and in 1799, Dobbs in Parliament opposed the Union in an extraordinary speech in which, in a strain of passionate earnestness, he contended from the Books of Daniel and Revelation that by amalgamating Ireland with England it would run counter to the whole scheme of prophecy. In 1780, however, these eccentricities had not yet fully appeared, and on more than one occasion Dobbs took a considerable part in directing the course of Irish politics.[1]

'The epidemic madness,' as Lord Buckingham called it, 'so assiduously circulated by Lord Charlemont, Mr. Grattan, Sir W. Osborne, and Lord Carysfort,'[2] rapidly spread, and on April 19, 1780, Grattan introduced a declaration of independence into the Irish House of Commons. It consisted of a series of resolutions asserting that while the crown of Ireland was inseparably annexed to that of Great Britain, while the two nations, united under one sovereign, were indissolubly connected by ties of interest, loyalty, and freedom, no power on earth but the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland was competent to make laws for Ireland. The speech

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[1] Dobbs's *Concise View of History and Prophecy* (Dublin, 1800). Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation.*

[2] Buckingham to Hillsborough, March 8, 1780.

introducing these resolutions was long remembered as the most splendid that had ever been heard in the Irish Parliament,[1] and no one who reads it, can fail to feel the wonderful fire and energy both of thought and language which it displayed. One passage the Lord Lieutenant especially remarked as having made an extraordinary impression. It was that in which, having read the offers of reconciliation lately made to the revolted colonies, in which, not only the power of taxation was given up and freedom of internal legislation established, but all power of the Parliament of Great Britain over America was renounced, Grattan asked whether it could be suspected that Great Britain would refuse to the most loyal of subjects what she had offered to those who had been declared in rebellion.

It was plain, however, that the majority were on the side of the ministers, though scarcely a voice was heard opposing the declaration on any other ground than that it was premature or inexpedient; and at last, after fifteen hours of debate, the question was indefinitely adjourned, leaving no entry of it in the Journals. 'The legislative power of Great Britain,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, when reporting the transaction to the Government, 'was not insisted upon by any other than the Attorney and Solicitor General. The voice against it was so general that those who might otherwise have

[1] 'One of the most forcible and animated speeches that ever distinguished a man.'—Dobbs's *History of Irish Affairs*. Hardy says: 'The oration which Grattan made on that occasion can never be forgotten by those who heard it. The language of Milton or Shakespeare can alone describe its effects.'—*Life of Charlemont*, i. 394. 'The subject,' Buckingham wrote, 'was introduced by Mr. Grattan with very great ability and with great warmth and enthusiasm, omitting no argument that could be artfully suggested to stimulate the mind.' —Buckingham to Hillsborough, April 21, 1780. Grattan himself preferred this to all his other speeches. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 39.

stood up to support it found themselves so few in number that they thought it more prudent to confine themselves to the inexpediency and ill effect of any declaration upon that head. . . . It is with the utmost concern I must acquaint your lordship that, although so many gentlemen expressed their concern that the subject had been introduced, the sense of the House against the obligation of any statutes of the Parliament of Great Britain within this kingdom is represented to me to have been almost unanimous.'[1]

The question could not rest there, and in two other forms it was revived in the same session. Yelverton proposed to amend Poyning's law, so as to take away from the Irish Privy Council its power of altering or suppressing Heads of Bills as soon as they had passed through one House of Parliament, and thus preventing the Irish Parliament from laying the wishes of the nation before the King. The Administration exerted all its powers against the proposition, and it was defeated by 130 to 105.[2] A much more serious attack speedily followed. Hitherto the army in Ireland had been governed solely by the English Mutiny Act, and voices had already been heard disputing the validity of that Act. Two magistrates had separately brought the question to an issue by discharging deserters who appeared before them, on the ground that there was no Irish Act compelling them to remain in the ranks.[3] Gervase Bushe had given notice of his intention to allay the disquietude on the subject by proposing an Irish Mutiny Bill. The question was one of the gravest and most perplexing that could be raised. If the Government yielded, it was tantamount to acknowledging that the English Act was insufficient. If they refused to accept the proposed

[1] April 21, 1780 (printed in Grattan's *Life*, ii. 52–55).

[2] Buckingham to Hillsborough, April 27, 1780.

[3] Grattan's *Life*, ii. 71–73.

measure, it was tolerably certain, after the general expression of opinion against the validity of English laws in Ireland, that few magistrates and no juries would take any notice of the English Mutiny Act, and that it would be in consequence perfectly impossible to enforce discipline or prevent desertion. A meeting of the most confidential servants of the Crown, and, a few days later, a formal discussion in the Privy Council, only brought out in clearer light the extreme difficulty of the situation. The Speaker, the Provost, Flood, the Duke of Leinster, Lord Annaly and the Chief Baron, all agreed that an Irish Mutiny Act was absolutely necessary, for the English law would be a mere dead letter if no magistrate was willing to execute it. The members of the Privy Council, who had seats in the House of Commons, declared that the Bill would certainly pass that House by a great majority, that all attempts to resist it would be futile and extremely damaging to the Government, and that many of the most prominent and most devoted supporters of the Administration would vote for it rather than allow the country to remain without an army, or the army without the means of enforcing discipline.

Under these circumstances, when Bushe introduced his motion into the House of Commons, Sir R. Heron, the Chief Secretary, moved that it should be postponed for a fortnight in order that instructions should be received from England, and he carried his motion by 146 to 75. 'In the course of the debate,' the Lord Lieutenant wrote, 'there was an almost universal declaration from all sides of the House of the necessity of some Bill to prevent the mischiefs that threatened. Many who supported the motion avowed their intention of voting for the Bill on a future day; and the majority was solely owing to the wishes of gentlemen to give every reasonable time to Administration for considering

the necessity of the measure. Some gentlemen declared that they would not as jurors, magistrates, or in any other capacity, suffer the British Mutiny law to be enforced, and the whole tenor of the debate leaves no room to doubt that few inferior magistrates will dare, even if they were so disposed, as they are not, to act under that mutiny law. . . . The gentlemen most zealous for his Majesty's service are determined to support this Bill. . . . The impossibility of any effectual efforts against it in the House of Commons is beyond a doubt. The dangerous consequences which must ensue from its being rejected elsewhere, when supported and deemed necessary by the voice of the Commons, are too glaring to be minutely mentioned,' and it was tolerably certain that the Irish Privy Council could not be induced to reject it.[1]

The measure of Bushe was one which could only be justified by the extreme urgency of the question, and it was the more remarkable because the House of Commons, which showed itself thus disposed at all hazards to assume the sole legislative power of Ireland, was at the same time the most liberal which had ever sat in Ireland in its grants to the Crown. At the height of the constitutional conflict all parties concurred in doing the very utmost in their power for the support of the general interest of the Empire. In the same month in which Buckingham wrote to the Government describing the determination of the Irish Parliament to have their own Mutiny Act, he wrote a remarkable letter describing their 'liberal endeavours' to rectify the condition of the finances. 'Your lordship will observe,' he said, 'that the Commons have in this session granted 350,000*l.* before Christmas, and 260,000*l.* since Christmas, in the whole 610,000*l.*, to be raised by loan. They will also

[1] Buckingham to Hillsborough, May 8, 1780.

have imposed new taxes to the estimated annual amount of 153,000*l.* I understand, no effort of equal magnitude, either in loans or in taxes, was ever yet made in any one session.' All the new taxes, he added, that had been granted since the accession of George II. did not exceed those granted in this one year. All the sums borrowed previous to the year 1763, did not together amount to as large a sum as that which was borrowed in this single session. The largest sum ever borrowed before in a session was 466,000*l.*, and this sum was raised in the session immediately preceding.[1]

Hillsborough, in answer to the letters of the Lord Lieutenant, enjoined him strenuously to resist the Mutiny Bill of Bushe, if it proceeded on the foundation of the British Act not being binding in Ireland,[2] and accordingly when Bushe, on May 22, introduced his motion for leave to bring in the Bill, Sir R. Heron was very reluctantly obliged to oppose him. He soon, however, found that the feeling of the House was even stronger than he had anticipated, and a division being forced on, he was beaten by no less than 140 to 18.[3] It was then proposed by some members who were favourable to the Government to introduce a Mutiny Bill which was verbally entirely different from the English Act, and contained no allusion to it. They argued that, although the introduction of an Irish Mutiny Bill would, no doubt, imply a denial of the validity of the English Act, yet if this were not stated, and if the Irish Bill made no allusion to the English law, the Government might shut their eyes to the inference, and end the contest without much discredit.[4] This idea does not, however, appear to have been pressed, and the

[1] May 18, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough.
[2] May 14, 1780.
[3] May 22, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough.
[4] May 28, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough.

Bill moved by Bushe, with an additional clause moved by Foster, to the effect that the army should be regulated by such laws as the King has made, or may make, not extending to life and limb, passed successfully through the House of Commons and through the Privy Council, and was transmitted to England.[1]

So far the tactics of the national party had been eminently successful, but now a strange reaction occurred which illustrates vividly the spasmodic and uncertain character of the resolutions of the Irish Parliament.[2] A large part of those who had supported the Irish Mutiny Bill did so, not on any constitutional principle, but simply in order to avert the great practical evil of a disorganised army, and they were only too willing that the question should never be reopened. Some members considered the concession of an Irish Mutiny Act sufficient, and were willing as a compromise to make an equivalent concession to Government, arguing that Parliament retained the right of voting the supplies for the army, and corrupt influence was largely brought to bear upon the great borough owners. The Mutiny Bill was returned from England, but it was returned with a significant alteration, expunging the words which limited its duration from session to session.[3] It was in vain that Grattan and his followers urged that to pass a perpetual Mutiny Bill would be to

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, ii. 85–98.

[2] Daly, one of the most prominent members of the Irish House of Commons, very sagaciously said of it: 'Were I a minister and wished to carry a very untoward measure, it would be directly after we had passed some strong resolution against the Court. So blended is the good-nature of Irish gentlemen with their habitual acquiescence, that unless party or the times are very violent indeed, we always wish to shrink from a second resolution against a minister, and to make, as it were, some atonement for our precipitant patriotism by as rapid a return to our original civility and complaisance.' — Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, i. 262–282.

[3] The sessions of the Irish Parliament being at this time biennial.

surrender in Ireland what Englishmen had ever regarded as an essential guarantee of constitutional freedom. It was in vain that they argued that such a measure would be more than commonly dangerous in Ireland, where the existence of the hereditary revenue had in a great measure deprived the Commons of the power of the purse. It was in vain that they even threatened to secede in a body from Parliament. A motion for restoring the original words was defeated by 114 to 62, and a perpetual Mutiny Bill passed, thus placing the government of the army beyond the power of Parliament.[1]

Buckingham deemed it an important victory, though in truth it only created a new grievance, which it became a leading object of the national party to remove. The discontent it produced in the country was greatly aggravated by the conduct of the English Privy Council in reducing a protective duty which the Irish Parliament had imposed on refined sugar imported into Ireland, and by the conduct of the House of Commons in accepting this alteration, which was believed to be fatal to the refining interest in Ireland. The language held towards the House of Commons in public meetings now became more violent. It was said that parliamentary reform was the most urgent of all the real wants of the country, and that the majority of the House were completely in the hands of a few bribed borough owners. They had refused the passionate wish of the nation for a declaration of legislative independence, and they had granted Administration a right of governing the army without their consent, which in the worst times the most servile of English Parliaments would never have conceded. Three bodies of Dublin volunteers passed resolutions denouncing the conduct of the majority, and

[1] Sir R. Heron to Stanier Porten, Aug. 9. Buckingham to Weymouth, Aug. 17, 1780.

they ordered these resolutions to be published in the papers. The session ended on September 2, and nearly the last act of the House of Commons was to censure the volunteer resolutions as seditious and libellous, and to call upon the Lord Lieutenant to institute prosecutions against the printers and publishers.[1]

So ended one of the longest and one of the most eventful sessions hitherto known in Ireland, and it was speedily followed by the recall of Buckingham. For a long time the nerves of the Viceroy had been strained almost beyond the limits of endurance. He spoke of himself as 'a man whose mind has been ulcerated with a variety of embarrassments for thirty weary months.'[2] The utterly defenceless state of the country in the beginning of a great war, the weekly and almost daily fears of invasion, the rise of a great army of volunteers wholly beyond the control and influence of Government; the rapid increase of the popular demand for a fundamental change in the constitution of the country, the doubts that hung upon the constitution of the Irish army, the determination of the Government, even at the last moment and in spite of his remonstrance, to drain the country of almost every available soldier,[3] all these things had reduced the Lord Lieutenant to a state of deplorable anxiety. The Home Government, profoundly ignorant of Irish affairs, saw a great movement rising which was completely beyond their control, and they blamed the Viceroy; they compelled him on several occasions to pursue a policy opposed to his judgment, and they slighted several of his recommendations. Scott, the Attorney-General, and Beresford, who was soon

[1] Commons' *Journals*, xix. 499–501.

[2] March 1780. In another letter (Nov. 22), he says his mind was 'very sensibly affected and enervated,' and that he wrote by another hand, as his 'spirits were not equal to the task.'

[3] Oct. 7, 1780. Buckingham to Hillsborough. Three more regiments were withdrawn, 'a measure of the most serious cast.'

after First Commissioner of the Revenue, had long been intriguing against him, and had been endeavouring by repeated letters to Robinson, the English Secretary of the Treasury, to procure his recall.[1] In the last months of his administration Buckingham had been reduced to the necessity of opposing the overwhelming preponderance of national sentiment and nearly all the honest men in Parliament, by the most flagrant and overwhelming bribery. Nothing now remained but the distribution of the rewards; and the despatches, which have fortunately been printed, written at the close of his administration, reveal the true character of the contest.

Immediately after the termination of the session, he wrote to Lord North, stating that 'without engagements strongly to recommend' several politicians for peerages, 'it would have been impossible in any sort to have surmounted the various difficulties which have lately attended the Government,' and he accordingly recommended eight commoners for the peerage, thirteen peers for advancement in the peerage, five appointments to the Privy Council, seventeen persons for civil pensions, and several others for favours of other kinds. He apologises for the number of his recommendations, but says: 'I am driven to this necessity, not having any other means of gratifying the expectation of gentlemen who engaged in the service of Government through this long and arduous session.' In nearly every instance recent political services are given as the sole ground for the recommendation.[2]

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[1] See the correspondence of the Right Hon. J. Beresford (privately printed), and also a 'most secret' letter of Buckingham to Hillsborough, Dec. 17, 1779.

[2] See the letters of the Lord Lieutenant between Sept. 8 and Nov. 19, 1780. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 163–175.

The English ministers were startled by the multitude of requests, and refused to grant them all. The King consented, however, besides many minor favours in the shape of places and pensions, to make five new peers, and to raise eleven peers one or more steps in the peerage. This was the price at which the perpetual Mutiny Act and a few other slight triumphs were purchased, and the Lord Lieutenant considered it exceedingly insufficient. 'As the engagements I have entered into,' wrote Buckingham, 'are so many and so strong that I am convinced the Government will be materially prejudiced if the faith of the Chief Governor should not be maintained, I will trouble your lordship no further than to remark that the last session was extremely critical, and that the conclusion would not have been so decidedly favourable to Government if such engagements had not been entered into at the moment.'[1] 'With respect to the noblemen and gentlemen whose requests have not succeeded, . . . the recommendations of many of those persons submitted to his Majesty for that honour, arose from engagements taken up at the press of the moment to secure questions upon which the English Government were very particularly anxious. My sentiments cannot but be the same with respect to the Privy Council and pensions, and I had not contracted any absolute engagements of recommendation either to peerage or pension till difficulties arose which necessarily occasioned so much and such forcibly communicated anxiety to his Majesty's Cabinet that I must have been culpable in neglecting any possible means of securing a majority in the House of Commons.'[2] Some of the letters of prominent politicians are still preserved, expressing their indignation at the inadequacy of their rewards.

[1] Dec. 6, 20, 1780.
[2] Nov. 19, 1780. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 169, 170.

It would be difficult to have a clearer illustration of the manner in which, through the extreme concentration of political power, it was possible in the Irish Parliament to override the real sentiments of the country, and these transactions should be remembered by those who would form a just estimate of the later conduct of the volunteers on the question of parliamentary reform. It is manifest, too, how serious must have been the effect upon the Irish peerage of creations so lavish and so corrupt as those under Lord Townshend, Lord Harcourt, and Lord Buckingham. The sale of peerages had become the ordinary resource of Government; and Grattan, in a speech made some years later, predicted with great force its inevitable tendency 'to taint the nobility,' to 'undermine the moral props of opinion and authority,' and to produce in Ireland a levelling, democratic, and revolutionary spirit of the most dangerous kind. In truth, the respect for rank, however much it may be decried by philosophers as a mere figment of the imagination, is, politically, a very real thing, for it is a great power of guidance and influence in the affairs of men. In a country like Ireland, which is torn by historical antagonisms and religious differences; where the mass of the population are poor, ignorant, credulous, and excitable, and at the same time passionately loyal to their leaders, none of the natural forms of healthy influence can be safely neglected, for nothing is more needed than wise guidance and well-directed respect. That the Irish gentry were not incapable of political leadership is sufficiently shown by the volunteer movement, and by many honourable episodes in the history of the Irish Parliament; and even in the disgraceful contest about the Perpetual Mutiny Act, Grattan was able to assert that, although the great borough owners had gone over to the Government, 'the weight of property, beyond comparison,'

was on the popular side.[1] A dishonest historian, who selects or conceals his facts according to the impression he wishes to convey, may, no doubt, discover without difficulty authentic materials for an unqualified diatribe against the Irish Protestants and their Parliament; but a true picture will contain many lights as well as many shades, and a faithful narrator will make large allowance for unfavourable circumstances and antecedents. He will be struck with the smallness of the military force with which Ireland in many troubled periods was kept in perfect peace. He will recognise the large amount of ability, loyalty, and public spirit which undoubtedly existed in the Irish Parliament during the last thirty years of its existence, the many steps of constitutional and material progress that were taken under its auspices, the noble efforts that it made to break down the system of religious proscription, and to bridge the chasm which yawned between the two great sections of the Irish people. But the taint of corruption had sunk deeply into the great borough owners. The peerage, which was the natural representative of the landed classes, was systematically degraded; and the majority of Irish titles are historically connected with memories, not of honour, but of shame.

Lord Buckingham was succeeded as Viceroy by Lord Carlisle, who took Sir W. Eden—afterwards the first Lord Auckland—as his chief secretary, and arrived in Ireland towards the close of December 1780. The new Lord Lieutenant was a young man of considerable promise and accomplishments, but exceedingly inexperienced in official life. He had been educated at Eton with Charles Fox, and with the Duke of Leinster; had published a few short poems, among others a trans-

[1] See his pamphlet on the Perpetual Mutiny Act. *Miscellaneous Works*, p. 25.

lation of the story of Ugolino from Dante; had thrown himself ardently into the fashionable dissipations of his time, but, like his close friend, Charles Fox, had never lost his interest in politics, and had been selected in 1778 as one of the Commissioners who were sent out to negotiate with the Americans.[1] Eden had on this occasion been one of his colleagues. He was bound to his future chief by a very warm friendship, and in 1779 he had addressed to him some rather valuable letters on the trade restrictions of Ireland.

As more than nine months elapsed before it was necessary to summon Parliament, Carlisle had ample time to master the circumstances of the country, and his general impression was decidedly favourable. Great caution, indeed, was required, and he especially urged that Ireland should not be included in the English Mutiny Act; but he found among the chief people in Ireland a widespread sentiment, strengthened, no doubt, by the recent resolutions in favour of parliamentary reform, 'that the aristocratic part of the Government had lost its balance, that there was an evident necessity of regaining from the people that power which, if suffered to continue in their hands, must end in the general ruin of the whole; and that, for their own security and happiness, English Government must be supported.' 'The wild notions of republicanism,' he thought, 'were every day more the objects of contempt and derision,' and 'the national fever was subsiding.'[2] One of his earliest measures was to bestow the Bishopric of Killala upon a brother of Pery, the Speaker, who, from his position, experience, and great ability, had much weight with all parties in Ireland, and who had

[1] Many particulars relating to Lord Carlisle—who is now chiefly remembered by a line in *Childe Harold*—will be found in the second volume of Jesse's *Life of Selwyn*.

[2] Carlisle to Hillsborough, Jan. 9, 1781.

promised the new Administration 'a systematic and decided support upon a principle of public duty.'[1]

Eden, in his confidential letters to England, expressed himself well satisfied with the tone of feeling towards England prevailing both in Parliament and the country,[2] and he mentioned that of 198 members who were present at the meeting of Parliament, 160 were 'as decided friends to Government as Irish politics can admit.'[3] At the same time, in a very curious and significant letter, he urged that one of the great wants of the Irish Government was a fund of secret service money like that which existed in England. There was, indeed, a small fund, varying from 1,200*l.* to 2,000*l.*, which bore this name, but its title was altogether a misnomer, for it was merely a fund for paying extra packet-boats, donations to foreigners in distress, illuminations, beer to the populace on the King's birthday, and such like expenses. It was disbursed by the ordinary clerks, and vouchers were duly sent in. 'In short,' he says, 'as we have not the constitutional pretext of foreign service, we have not any means of carrying into Parliament a demand for a sum without accounting for its uses. The mischief which has long resulted from this circumstance is not to be described, and in the present state of the country the wise application of about 3,000*l.* a year might be of a degree of importance to his

[1] Carlisle to Hillsborough, Jan. 7, 1781.

[2] 'The country is at this moment right-headed and kindly disposed, if frankly and fairly used. . . . We are not fretfully disposed, but we cannot help remarking that we have not received one syllable, either public or private, from Downing Street since we turned the corner on the 3rd December.'—Eden to Robinson, *Correspondence of the Right Hon. J. Beresford*, i. 161, 162. 'Our session commenced on Tuesday last, with much good temper towards his Excellency and his secretary, and with a disposition towards Great Britain less suspicious than was ever known, and tending almost to cordiality.'—Ibid. p. 174. (March 21, Oct. 13, 1781.)

[3] Ibid. p. 194.

Majesty's affairs beyond what words can estimate. . . . When I state it at 3,000*l.* a year, I state it much below what I would wish, and below what in my conscience, I believe, would be for his Majesty's interests to allow.' He proposed that the Lord Lieutenant should be authorised to draw such a sum from the King's privy purse, 'to be applied here to his Majesty's service and the effective conduct of government,' a favourable occasion being taken to throw upon the Irish revenue a pension to an equivalent amount in favour of some person whom his Majesty would otherwise have provided for from his English revenue.[1]

An embarrassing commercial question had just arisen. The free trade which had been so liberally granted to Ireland in 1779 had as yet been of very little use, for the war cut off all commercial intercourse with the American colonies, France, Spain, and Holland, and greatly added to the risks and difficulties of commerce with other countries. The Irish manufacturers had, however, sent some woollen goods to Portugal, and they heard with much astonishment and indignation that those goods were refused access into the country. By the Methuen Treaty in 1703 'British' woollens had obtained a free entrance into Portugal, and it was contended that in all the commercial treaties made at that time Ireland was included under the term British. In consequence of that treaty the wines of Portugal were admitted into Ireland on more favourable terms than the wines of France. The Portuguese, however, denied that Ireland was included in the treaty, and they argued with much force that its signers cannot have contemplated the admission of Irish woollens into Portugal,

[1] July 15, 1781. Eden to Hillsborough (most secret). A book containing the entries for secret service money is preserved in the Irish State Paper Office, and quite supports the statement of Eden.

because at that time the Irish were expressly forbidden to export such goods to any country whatever. The English Government appears to have done what it could for the Irish, but its overtures were met by an obstinate resistance. It feared to alienate Portugal at a time when the greater part of Europe was actively hostile; and it was extremely anxious to prevent the Irish Parliament from dealing with the question, both because rash words might sow enmity between England and Portugal, and also because the interference of the Irish Parliament in Imperial treaties would be a very dangerous precedent.[1]

In the summer months provincial reviews of the volunteers were held with much success. The movement showed no signs of flagging, and the volunteers had greatly increased in number and improved in discipline and in their equipments. At the Belfast review, which was the most considerable, 5,383 volunteers were on the field, with no less than thirteen field-pieces.[2] The number of volunteers in this review was nearly double that in the review of 1780; and it was alleged, though probably with some exaggeration, that the volunteers throughout Ireland towards the close of 1781 amounted to not less than 80,000 men.[3] The dangers of foreign invasion were still sufficient to stimulate all the energies of the country, and in June it was found necessary to provide convoys for vessels trading between England and Ireland. In September a combined French and Spanish fleet of thirty-four sail appeared in the Channel, and some ships approached the southern coast of Ireland.[4] Charlemont, who had recently been elected head of the Leinster and Ulster volunteers, at

[1] A very voluminous correspondence on this subject will be found both in the Irish State Paper Office and the English Record Office.

[2] Dobbs, *History of Irish Affairs from* 1779 *to* 1782, p. 43.

[3] Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ch. iv. Adolphus (*History of England*, iii. 351) estimates them at 100,000.

[4] See Grattan's *Life*, ii. 189.

once waited upon the Lord Lieutenant, who informed him that there was every reason to believe that an immediate invasion was meditated, that an express had just been received furnishing many particulars, and that the city of Cork was probably the intended point of attack. The moment of danger was well fitted to show whether the political agitation in Ireland had yet taken the form of disaffection, but no traces of such a spirit were shown. The Ulster volunteers under the command of Charlemont, the Dublin volunteers under the command of the Duke of Leinster, volunteered in great numbers to march at once into Munster, to act under the King's Commander-in-Chief and to assist the very small force of regular troops. The offer was accepted in grateful though guarded terms, and it was computed that 15,000 men could be spared from Ulster for the defence of Munster without leaving the former province undefended. In Newry it was resolved to send all the younger volunteers southwards, and a corps called the Ladies' Fencibles was organised for the defence of the town and neighbourhood, in which no man was to be enrolled who was under fifty or was without a wife and children.[1]

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, i. 404, 406, 407. 'In eventually accepting these offers of service I have used expressions as guarded as the nature of the situation would admit; but I have thought it my duty at the same time not to mark the least jealousy either of the strength or right disposition of the volunteer corps, but to accept their services with the utmost confidence. I am fully aware of the delicacy of the present circumstances, but as the military force of this country is utterly unequal to its effective defence should any powerful body of the enemy be landed here, and as such an armed force as the volunteers of Ireland would certainly not remain inactive in the case of an invasion, I have judged it the most expedient step I could take for H.M.'s service to secure to Government the direction and application of that force wherever it may be found most useful in the defence of the State. . . . At present it is my intention, if the exigencies of the State should require it, to employ the volunteer corps both in detached services and in the protection of

The correspondence of the Lord Lieutenant shows that in the judgment of the Government the loyalty which was professed was not mere lip loyalty, and that the volunteer forces had become a very real and very powerful element in the defence of the country. Eden sent to Hillsborough their numerous addresses, 'in order,' as he said, 'to give your lordship an early idea both of the great extent of this business and of the loyal and generous spirit which appears on the present occasion.' 'I cannot foresee,' he added, 'how far this matter may be understood, and how it may be construed in England; but here it is universally understood as a very pleasing turn in the whole political state of Ireland, creditable and strengthening to his Excellency's administration. . . . The bodies of men who had embodied and disciplined themselves for military service, and who had hitherto acted in a line entirely separated from Government, are now cordially desirous to act implicitly and zealously under his Majesty's commands in whatever manner may be found expedient. It is a great and complicated machine, and subject to embarrassments and possible risks in the further conduct of it; but so far as I can understand it from the near view which I have of it, I trust his Excellency will . . . be able to model the whole business so as to render a very solid service to his Majesty's kingdom. . . . 11,000 or 12,000 seem to have already offered, others are coming in every moment.'[1] 'No event,' Lord Hillsborough wrote to the Lord Lieutenant, 'could be more fortunate for the public security than the resolution which has been

those parts of the kingdom from which the military shall have been withdrawn, which might otherwise be left exposed to the ravages of the lower class of people, too liable at all times, and more especially in a time of confusion, to be tempted to acts of violence and plunder.'—Sept. 8, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

[1] Sept. 14, 1781. Eden to Hillsborough (secret).

taken to make those spirited offers of assistance which have lately been presented to your Excellency; and it gives the King great satisfaction to receive, at so critical a conjuncture as the present, additional proofs of that loyalty, duty, and affection which he has constantly experienced from his subjects in Ireland.'[1] Among the delegates of the volunteers who offered their unconditional services to the Government in the event of invasion was Henry Grattan; and a gratifying incident at this critical time was a letter from Mr. Goold, a Roman Catholic merchant of Cork, offering on the part of himself and his friends to furnish immediately 12,000 guineas for the purposes of defence, and to risk their whole fortunes in support of the Government.[2]

Carlisle wished much to thank the volunteers as such, in his speech in opening Parliament in October, and he represented to the Government that 'so long as these corps are commanded by noblemen and gentlemen of known attachment to Government, they cannot furnish subject of apprehension, and as long as their loyalty is cherished and kept warm, the lower ranks will not withdraw themselves from commanders of a like disposition.'[3] Hillsborough, however, refused to allow any public recognition of the volunteer corps to be expressed on the part of the Crown, and the Lord Lieutenant was obliged to confine himself to a general acknowledgment of the 'spirited offers of assistance' he had received from all parts of the kingdom. In the instructions he received to guide his administration during the ensuing session he was desired as far as possible to divert the Parliament from all constitutional questions, and to oppose with all his power any attempt to carry a declaration of independence, the repeal of

[1] Sept. 15, 1781. Hillsborough to Carlisle.

[2] Sept. 17, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough (private).

[3] Sept. 24, 1781.

Poyning's Act, or the limitation of the Mutiny Act. The Habeas Corpus Bill the ministers resolved after some hesitation to accept, provided a clause were inserted enabling the Lord Lieutenant to suspend it when Parliament was not sitting. The Bill securing the independence of the judges they determined strenuously to resist unless it was accompanied by the clauses which had been introduced under Lord Townshend.[1] Lord Shannon, the Duke of Leinster, Lord Ely, and Lord Tyrone agreed to support the Government, and although a great preponderance of talent was independent of or opposed to it, a respectable majority in the House was secured. Outside the House, however, the Irish Protestants were almost undivided in their determination to press on the great question of legislative independence.

Among the first measures of the Parliament which met in October was another unanimous vote of thanks to the volunteers for their recent conduct, and a Habeas Corpus Bill was introduced and carried with little discussion. The question of the trade with Portugal gave rise to more than one long and angry debate; and some unfounded suspicions of the sincerity of the English Government were expressed, as well as some not unnatural indignation that a question of such capital importance to Ireland should not have been mentioned in the Speech from the Throne. An address to the King was ultimately agreed on,[2] and the debates were chiefly remarkable for the tone of undisguised hostility to ministers adopted by Flood. During the administration of Harcourt he had cordially supported, and had probably in some degree influenced, the Government, but under Lord Buckingham he complained bitterly

[1] Carlisle to Hillsborough, Sept. 15. Hillsborough to Carlisle, Sept. 29, Oct. 21, 1781.

[2] Commons' *Journals*, xx. 286.

that he was treated as 'a mere placeman,' without confidence and without power, and he appears in consequence to have absented himself on important occasions from meetings of the Privy Council, and to have rarely voted and scarcely ever spoken for the Government in Parliament. His interposition in favour of the free trade amendment had greatly embarrassed them. In the Privy Council he advocated the limitation of the Mutiny Act, and his attitude on the occasion of Grattan's motion for a declaration of independence in 1780 was evidently intended to save that motion from defeat. In general, however, he who had under Lord Townshend been the most prominent orator in the Irish House of Commons sat there a silent and a moody man, occupying a position which was manifestly a false one, and not trusted on either side. Buckingham for a long time desired to remove him from his office, but the English Government took no notice of his request.[1] It is stated, though on no very good authority, that Flood had actually written out his resignation and entrusted it to Jenkinson, but it is certain that it never was presented.[2] He was now, at the request of Lord Carlisle, replaced in his office of Vice-Treasurer by Lord Shannon, and removed from his seat in the Privy Council; and from this time, with a somewhat damaged reputation, and amid many taunts at his long silence, he took a prominent part in opposition, and showed an evident desire to resume the direction of those popular questions which had now been taken up by others.

A question which had not yet been considered was raised by Yelverton at the beginning of the session. The Irish coast had recently been almost absolutely unprotected and Irish vessels continually captured, the

[1] Buckingham to Hillsborough, Nov. 20, 1780.

[2] Warden Flood's *Life of Flood*, pp. 129, 130.

English fleet being chiefly occupied in other parts of the globe. Yelverton proposed that some frigates should be built at Irish expense, and devoted wholly to the protection of the Irish coast. The plan was postponed at the desire of the Government; but Lord North thought it feasible provided the Irish fleet remained under the full control of the Admiralty. Hillsborough, however, expressed his dissent in a letter which throws a vivid ray on his secret intentions. 'I do not like,' he said, 'the beginning of anything like a navy under the Parliament of Ireland. It opens a door to I cannot tell what, that raises some alarm in my mind. As soon as the Union I wish for takes place, you cannot have too many dockyards, shipbuilders, &c., and I very sincerely hope the glory of your Excellency's administration may be crowned with the completion of that important and salutary measure.'[1]

A few other measures were brought in which may be briefly dismissed. A Habeas Corpus Bill was passed with general concurrence and sent over to England. The salaries of the judges were raised; Grattan, seconded by Flood, moved a limitation of the Perpetual Mutiny Act, but was defeated by an overwhelming majority; and Flood, who again brought forward the question in a slightly different form, was induced to withdraw it. The Government seemed decidedly gaining ground in the House; and before the close of the winter Daly, Fitzgibbon, Bushe, Ponsonby and his friends, and all the Donegal interest except Yelverton, had passed from partial or complete opposition into a support of the Government. Outside the House the prospect was more dubious, and the Lord Lieutenant stated that he found the state of the country much more critical than was imagined in England; 'nearly the whole

[1] Dec. 3, 1781. Hillsborough to Carlisle.

body of the people in arms, well appointed, and in a great degree disciplined, . . . much relaxed as to any idea and principle of government, full of speculative earnestness for fanciful improvements in their constitution.' He believed, however, that the danger was diminishing, that there was no disloyalty, though much heat and suspicion, and that for the present at least he had succeeded in conciliating the good opinion and confidence of the kingdom.[1]

On December 4, Yelverton was to bring forward his important measure for amending, and in part repealing Poyning's Act; but the news had just arrived of the capture of the army of Lord Cornwallis in Virginia, and every other consideration was absorbed by the crushing calamity which had fallen on the English name. Few things in parliamentary history are less pleasing than the furious party recriminations which in the English Parliament immediately followed the announcement of the disasters both of Saratoga and of Yorktown. In the Irish Parliament no such spirit was displayed. 'Mr. Yelverton,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'postponed his intended motion, and, with a propriety which was felt universally by the House, proposed an address to his Majesty full of loyalty to his royal person, family, and Government, with offers of assistance of that House. . . . He introduced it with a speech of much dignity, expressive of the firmest attachment to his Majesty and to the interests of Great Britain.'[2] 'I must do this general justice,' adds the Viceroy, 'to every gentleman who rose in the debate, to say that they seemed to vie with each other in forcible expressions of affectionate duty to the King and sincere attachment to the interests of Great Britain,

[1] Nov. 10, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

[2] Dec. 5, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

and the rest of the members by their warm and repeated approbation of such expressions demonstrated their cordial concurrence in them. I have sincere pleasure in this confirmation of my opinion that his Majesty has not anywhere more faithful subjects than his people of Ireland.' The address did not, however, pass without some opposition. Both Flood and Grattan urged that it should include a demand or recognition of Irish independence; both of them, while supporting a full tender of Irish services against foreign enemies, objected to any expressions encouraging a continuance of hostility against America; and Grattan, in a speech which the Lord Lieutenant described as replete with art and eloquence, urged that Ireland would only be following the best English precedents in joining 'redress of grievances to an offer of supply.' The House, however, was in no mood for such a proceeding, and Yelverton's address was carried by 167 to 37.[1]

The question of Poyning's law was again introduced independently both by Flood and Yelverton. The former maintained, in a speech three and a half hours long, that the power of the Irish Privy Council to alter heads of Bills before transmitting them to England was no part of its original intention, and rested solely on an erroneous decision of the judges in 1692. Yelverton entirely dissented from this view of the law, and there was a perceptible difference, both in tone and arguments, between the two speakers, though the objects at which they were aiming were substantially the same. Yelverton, who was a very able, a very moderate, and a very honest man, and whose legal knowledge was of great advantage to the popular party, seems to have been always ready to waive personal questions; but the conduct of Flood was marked with some violence and much

[1] Dec. 5, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

jealousy. On one occasion he complained bitterly that 'after a service of twenty years in the study of a particular question, it was taken out of his hands and entirely wrested from him;' and he added, 'the honourable gentleman is erecting a temple to liberty; I hope therefore at least I shall be allowed a niche in the fane.' Yelverton reminded him in reply, that 'if a man marries a wife and lives with her in constancy it is a crime to take her away from him; but that by the criminal law, if a man shall separate from his wife, desert and abandon her for seven years, another might then take her up and give her his protection.'[1]

It was clear, however, that the House was in no disposition to oppose the Government on the question of Poyning's law, and a committee which Flood desired on the subject was refused by 66 to 135. At the same time the Lord Lieutenant was secretly counselling compliance with the demand of Yelverton, who stood wholly aloof from the Government, but for whose abilities and character he retained a very warm respect. Yelverton asked that the Irish Privy Council should be restricted to sending over to England the proceedings of the Irish Parliament without alteration, and this demand Carlisle thought should be accepted. 'The present time,' he wrote, 'is well suited to quieting these great questions in the most moderate manner. The independence of Irish legislation is become the creed of the kingdom; but on any reasonable point which does not contravene that principle I am confident that his Majesty's Government possesses a loyal, practicable, and affectionate support.' He urged above all things, as of vital importance in the present crisis, that Ireland should not be included in any British Act. 'Every regulation or restriction which Great Britain may think fit to subject

[1] *Parl. Debates*, i. 189.

herself to, and which she may consider as equally incumbent upon Ireland, will be cheerfully adopted by this country and effectually executed by Irish laws. The insertion, therefore, of Ireland in British Acts is become quite unnecessary, and the general and most generous readiness to adopt any measure in this Parliament that can be thought expedient in England for the benefit of both countries was well exemplified last week in the unanimous concurrence of the House of Commons in the Bill for regulating bounties, drawbacks, &c.'[1]

The Habeas Corpus Bill was returned from England and became law, thus realising one great object of the national party. Another subject of a still more important character was a contemplated measure in favour of the Roman Catholics. This measure, like that of 1778, emanated chiefly from the independent section in Parliament. On December 29, when Parliament had entered on the Christmas recess, Carlisle wrote to Hillsborough, stating that some such measure was in contemplation. 'The members who take the lead in this are chiefly independent gentlemen, though some of them are disposed to show a degree of deference to the sentiments of the Government.'[2] Hillsborough, in reply, urged that the time was not suited for a Catholic Bill. He reminded the Lord Lieutenant of the extent and violence of the disturbance which the English Bill in favour of the Catholics had produced in England, and feared that new concessions at this time might lead to new outrages. 'On the other hand, the Roman Catholics, whose conduct towards Government has for many years been not only unexceptionable but meritorious, will feel rather disappointed than gratified by such a Bill as Mr. Gardiner's appears to be. Every liberal-

[1] Dec. 29, 1781 (secret and confidential).

[2] Dec. 29, 1781. Carlisle to Hillsborough (secret and confidential).

minded man wishes to go further in their favour,' and probably they would themselves wish the question to be postponed till more could be done. At the same time Hillsborough is careful to explain that he does not 'mean to suggest any absolute discouragement,' and that if a Bill is transmitted from Ireland, it will be very carefully considered. 'But,' he says, 'your Excellency ought to be informed that the prejudices upon matters of this kind in the North of Ireland go to a violence hardly to be credited, and much beyond those of their too near neighbours in Scotland.'[1]

Hillsborough, as the event showed, misjudged the condition of the country, and had not realised the power of the national movement which had recently arisen in assuaging sectarian animosities. On January 31, 1782, when Parliament met after the adjournment, Gardiner gave notice of a Bill for the relief of Roman Catholics, and it was discussed in a somewhat desultory manner in several debates. It soon appeared that there was no real difference of opinion in the Irish Parliament about the propriety of giving a large and substantial relief to the Catholics, though there was some divergence of opinion about its exact amount, some alarm at the complexity of the subject arising from the great number of laws that must be repealed, and some fear lest an incautious measure should shake the security of property that was held under the Act of Settlement. On two important points—the propriety of granting the Catholics a complete religious toleration and a full and unrestricted possession of property—there was a perfect agreement;[2] but opinion was much divided about the expediency of giving them arms or votes, and allowing them to intermarry with Protestants; and the question having been relegated to a committee, only the preli-

[1] Jan. 24, 1782. Hillsborough to Carlisle.
[2] *Parl. Debates*, i. 807.

minary steps had been taken before the change in the English Ministry and the Irish Constitution.

Some speeches, however, were delivered on the condition of Catholic education which are extremely remarkable from the light they throw on the real state of Irish Protestant feeling, and on the wide gulf that lay between the letter of the law and its actual administration. Fitzgibbon, while strongly defending the laws which prohibited foreign education, said, 'I know to the honour of the present heads of the University that Catholics are received in it at this day by connivance. . . . The University of Dublin is open to them, and if they decline the advantage it is not on account of religion, for no religious conformity will be required.' Hely Hutchinson, the Provost of the University, was present, and he did not deny that at this time Roman Catholics were actually to be found among the students, but he desired that their admission should be legalised on the largest scale; and as the head of that great Protestant corporation he sketched the following very remarkable scheme for Irish education. 'My opinion,' he said, 'is strongly against sending Roman Catholics abroad for education, nor would I establish Popish colleges at home. Our gracious Sovereign, who is the legislator of the University of Dublin, may, I think, with ease be prevailed upon to pass a statute for admitting Catholics; and whenever I receive his pleasure on that subject, I shall be truly happy in obeying. The advantage of being admitted into the University of Dublin will be very great to Catholics. . . . If Roman Catholics are to participate in these advantages . . . they need not be obliged to attend the Divinity Professor, they may have one of their own; and I would have a part of the public money applied to their use, to the support of a number of poor lads as sizars, and to provide premiums for persons of merit, for I would have them go into exami-

nations and make no distinction between them and the Protestants but such as merit might claim. . . . In order to prepare Roman Catholics for the University, I would increase the number of diocesan schools and have Catholics instructed gratis in them; from thence they might come to Dublin, where they could live upon easier terms than in any other part of Ireland if it be considered that almost every family in the kingdom has friends or relations settled here. . . . I am an enemy to force when applied to the mind; let us by gentle means induce Roman Catholics to receive all the information they can—in God's name let them choose for themselves. . . . It is certainly a matter of importance that the education of their priests should be as perfect as possible, and that if they have any prejudices they should be prejudices in favour of their own country. I therefore think that a clause to regulate their education will give this Bill the best assurance of success. The present laws are disgraceful; they prohibit the Roman Catholics from receiving any education at all, and therefore should be abolished. The Roman Catholics should receive the best education in the established University at the public expense; but by no means should Popish colleges be allowed, for by them we should again have the press groaning with themes of controversy, college against college, and subjects of religious disputation that have long slept in oblivion would again awake, and awaken with them all the worst passions of the human mind.'[1]

While these questions were discussed in Parliament discontent and exasperation were growing rapidly beyond its walls. A Parliament which had uniformly supported by enormous majorities the administration of Lord Carlisle, which had rejected every attempt to repeal or modify Poyning's law, and which showed itself

[1] *Parl. Debates*, i. 309, 310.

completely subservient to a few venal borough owners, was no faithful representative of the sentiments or the aspirations of the Protestants of Ireland. Political resolutions had already emanated frequently from the volunteer body, and delegates from different corps had occasionally assembled; but a conviction was now spreading that it was necessary to bring the influence of the force in a more organised and emphatic form into the domain of home politics. On December 28, 1781, the officers and delegates of the first Ulster regiment, commanded by Lord Charlemont, assembled at Armagh under the presidency of Francis Evans, and passed a series of resolutions deploring the little attention paid to constitutional rights by the majority of those whose special duty was to establish them, and asserting that the Constitution could only be restored to its original purity by the most vigorous efforts to root out corruption and Court influence from the legislative body. In order to attain this end they summoned a meeting at Dungannon of delegates from all the volunteers of Ulster to discuss the present alarming condition of public affairs, and to publish to the country the results of their deliberations.

It was on February 15, 1782, that the delegates of 143 corps of Ulster volunteers assembled in obedience to this invitation, in full uniform, in the great church of Dungannon. They were some of them men of high rank, and most of them men of large property and of excellent character, and they conducted their debates with a gravity, decorum, and moderation which no assembly could have surpassed. Elected by a popular constituency of 25,000 armed men, free from the borough influence and from the corruption which tainted the Parliament in Dublin, animated with a consciousness of great services performed and with a sincere and ardent patriotism, they were undoubtedly the most faithful re-

presentatives then sitting of the opinions and wishes of the Irish Protestants. Colonel William Irvine was called to the chair, and a series of resolutions, drawn up by Charlemont, Flood, Grattan, Stewart the member for Tyrone, and Francis Dobbs, were submitted to the assembly.

They first unanimously asserted their right of deliberation by resolving that 'a citizen by learning the use of arms does not abandon any of his civil rights.' They then resolved with equal unanimity that 'a claim of any body of men, other than the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, to make laws to bindthis kingdom is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance;' that 'the ports of this country are by right open to all foreign countries not at war with the King;' 'that any burden thereupon or obstruction thereto, save only by the Parliament of Ireland, is unconstitutional, illegal, and a grievance;' and that 'the independence of judges is equally essential to the impartial administration of justice in Ireland as in England.' With a single dissenting voice they resolved 'that the power exercised by the Privy Council of both kingdoms under, or under colour or pretence of, the law of Poyning, was unconstitutional and a grievance;' that 'a Mutiny Bill not limited in point of duration from session to session is unconstitutional and a grievance; and that 'the minority of Parliament were entitled to their most grateful thanks.' With eleven dissenting voices they pledged themselves 'as freeholders, fellow-citizens, and men of honour,' at every coming election to support only those candidates who would seek a redress of these grievances, and to use all constitutional means to make the pursuit of redress speedy and effectual. They then unanimously determined that four members from each county in Ulster should be formed into a committee to act for the volunteers till the next general meeting, and to call

general meetings of the province when required; that another general meeting should be summoned in twelve months from the present, or within fourteen days of the dissolution of Parliament, should such an event take place sooner; that the committee should appoint nine of their number to be a committee in Dublin, in order to enter into communication with such volunteer associations in other provinces as may enter into similar resolutions, and to deliberate with them on the most constitutional means of carrying them into effect.

Then, after pledging themselves to consume no Portuguese wine till the restrictions had been taken off Irish exports to Portugal, they passed two memorable resolutions which had been drawn up by Grattan. They resolved, 'that we hold the right of private judgment in matters of religion to be equally sacred in others as in ourselves; that as men and as Irishmen, as Christians and as Protestants, we rejoice in the relaxation of the penal laws against our Roman Catholic fellow-subjects, and that we conceive the measure to be fraught with the happiest consequences to the union and the prosperity of the inhabitants of Ireland.' These resolutions, which marked the close of the long political schism between the Protestants and Catholics, were carried through the great representative body of the most Protestant province of Ireland with only two dissentient voices. Three clergymen, one of them an Anglican and the other two Presbyterians, were among the delegates, and they were also among the most prominent supporters of the resolutions, not only on grounds of policy, but on grounds of Christianity. 'The place we met in,' wrote Dobbs, who took a conspicuous part in these transactions, 'was the church, and I trust our proceedings did not pollute it.' The assembly before breaking up issued an address to the minority in Parliament. 'We thank you,' they said. 'for your noble and spirited though

hitherto ineffectual efforts in defence of the great constitutional rights of your country. . . . The almost unanimous voice of the people is with you, and in a free country the voice of the people must prevail. We know our duty to our sovereign, and are loyal. We know our duty to ourselves, and are resolved to be free. We seek for our rights, and no more than our rights, and in so just a pursuit we should doubt the being of a Providence if we doubted of success.'[1]

The assembly at Dungannon had an immediate influence of the most decisive kind. Ulster was the heart of the volunteer movement as it was the heart of the Protestantism of Ireland; and it became evident that no reliance could be henceforth placed on the continuance of those divisions and religious animosities which had hitherto paralysed the political energies of the nation. In all parts of the country the volunteer corps, guided by the leading gentry, and including all that was most respectable and most energetic among the Protestants, hastened to give their adhesion to the resolutions of Dungannon. The grand juries in almost every county passed resolutions asserting the right of Ireland to legislative independence,[2] and it was evident that on this question all classes were substantially united. A few days after the Dungannon resolutions, Grattan, in a speech two hours long, moved in the House of Commons an address to the King containing a declaration of the independence of the Irish Legislature. His speech comprised a full review of the authorities in favour of the doctrine of the sole competency of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland to make laws binding Ireland; he maintained that the doctrine of Ireland being bound by British Acts of Parliament was subsequent to the Restoration,

[1] Dobbs's *History of Irish Affairs from Oct.* 12, 1779, *to Sept.* 15, 1792. Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation.*

[2] Private, March 26, 1782. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

and rested not on any basis of right but solely on precedents such as might be adduced in England for the violation of the great charter, for forced loans, for ship-money, or for royal proclamations having the authority of law, and he concluded that the present moment was an eminently favourable one for securing the liberties of Ireland. It was impossible that England could safely refuse to the loyalty of Ireland the privilege she had offered to the arms of America, and he predicted, in a passage to which a hundred years have only given an additional significance, that American influence would long be felt in Irish politics. 'Do you see nothing,' he said, 'in that America but the grave and prison of your armies? And do you not see in her range of territory, cheapness of living, variety of climate and simplicity of life, the drain of Europe? Whatever is bold and disconsolate . . . to that point will precipitate, and what you trample on in Europe will sting you in America.'[1]

'His speech,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'was interwoven with expressions of loyalty to the King, and with sentiments of affection to and inseparable connection with Great Britain, of a disposition to give her every possible assistance, yet with a determination never to yield to the supremacy of the British Legislature.' Brownlow seconded the address. Burgh, Flood, Yelverton, Forbes, Sir Lucius O'Brien, and others defended it. The Attorney-General, supported by Ponsonby, Bushe, Day, and the Provost moved the postponement of the question, and they carried their point by 137 to 68. Flood immediately said he would speedily renew it in another form. 'I must not omit to inform your lordship,' wrote Carlisle, 'that, through the whole course of this debate the principle of Ireland

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 117, 118.

not being bound by acts of the British Legislature was most strenuously supported by every man who spoke on either side, even by those the most zealous in support of the Government, except only the Attorney-General, who, duly regarding his official situation, avoided declaring his opinion upon the question of law, though repeatedly and urgently called upon by Opposition.'[1]

The secret letters of the Lord Lieutenant at this crisis are so important, as showing the condition of opinion and the total impossibility of maintaining the old system of government, that it is necessary to quote them at some length. In a private letter of the same date as the last despatch, he wrote: 'The principle of Ireland not being bound by the laws of another Legislature is universally insisted upon with that enthusiasm and steady determination which leave no reason to imagine it will be abandoned. It has been spread with such industry that every rank and order in the nation are possessed of it, and I very much questi n whether any man of practice in the profession of the law would advise a client to bring his cause to issue upon the validity of a British Act in this kingdom, or whether a jury could be found to give a verdict on that foundation.' He again urgently asks that Ireland should not be mentioned in any British statute. 'Should any regulations be necessary to extend to this kingdom as well as to Great Britain, I have not the least reason to doubt that the nation would immediately enact them by her own laws.'[2] No signs of disaffection to the connection appeared, and it was a significant sign of the wish of Parliament to act in harmony with the Lord Lieutenant, that it selected this period to accomplish a scheme which had been suggested under Lord Townshend, and to purchase for him the Lodge in

[1] Feb. 23, 1782. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

[2] Feb. 23, 1782. (Private.) Carlisle to Hillsborough.

Phœnix Park as a summer residence. The most formidable objection which had been brought in Ireland against the declaration of independence was that an assertion that the English Parliament had no right to legislate for Ireland would invalidate the titles of the numerous landowners who had obtained their properties after the great measures of confiscation, and who held them on the security of English Acts of Parliament. In order to remove this objection, which had spread some feeling of insecurity among Irish landlords, Yelverton, in March, introduced a Bill adopting and giving force by Irish parliamentary authority to such English or British statutes as in any way affected the settlement of property in Ireland, or mutually affected and conferred equal benefits on the commerce and seamen of both kingdoms.[1]

'Mr. Grattan,' wrote Carlisle, 'from a natural enthusiasm, and Mr. Flood from different motives, have concurred with great earnestness in bringing forward to public discussion every question tending to assert the independent right of legislation in Ireland. The plain line of conduct which I have endeavoured to follow has been to suffer in no case whatever the smallest diminution of any of the asserted rights of Great Britain;' but this course could not be much longer successfully pursued. 'The restless and reasoning disposition of the volunteers of this kingdom, which undoubtedly do not fall short of 30,000 men actually in arms, and in the practice of frequent meetings and distant correspondence with each other, the popular jealousy with which the interference of British laws has long been considered, the approaching meetings of the several corps at the opening of the spring, . . . the public attention raised by the late discussions in

[1] *Parl. Debates*, i. 327.

Parliament, and the resentments excited by the uniform success of my Government, are all circumstances which induce me to look forward with some uneasiness. Your lordship cannot be ignorant that the actual exercise of the British Parliament of Ireland (*sic*) was utterly and totally impracticable long before I arrived in this kingdom. There was not a magistrate or revenue officer, however attached to or dependent on the British Government, who could venture to enforce an English law. The attempt would have been madness, as it was certain to receive a general and decided resistance. There was not a jury in the kingdom who would find a verdict under a British Act.'

Under such circumstances, to the great regret and astonishment of the Lord Lieutenant, four or five Acts mentioning Ireland had only last session been suffered to pass the British Parliament. The very existence of permanent good government here depends upon keeping the supporters of ministers 'in the fair opinion of their countrymen.' Yelverton's proposed Bill the Lord Lieutenant strongly supports. 'Mr. Yelverton stands very high in the opinion of the popular part of this kingdom. He has in several recent and essential instances shown a most sincere disposition to promote the loyalty and maintain the mutual interests of all his Majesty's dominions. It peculiarly became him to stand forth on the present subject, as his extensive practice at the bar had furnished him with many repeated instances of the determination of Irish juries, as well in matters of commerce as of private property, to place English laws totally out of their consideration.' It was seconded by 'a gentleman of so independent a character, and so cordially disposed towards Government, as Mr. Fitzgibbon.' 'It has long been the unanimous sentiment of every moderate-minded man of the best abilities in this kingdom,

that the question of legislation is gradually tending to some very serious issue.'[1]

Hillsborough answered, in evident perplexity, that it was now useless to give instructions for opposing Yelverton's Bill, but that he greatly questioned whether the Privy Council would return it 'without the consent and approbation of the Parliament of England.' The condition of Ireland appeared to him exceedingly alarming, and he was especially startled by a paper which was circulating through the grand juries, binding them, in all capacities, to recognise only Irish statutes.[2]

It is perfectly idle, Carlisle somewhat impatiently continued, to dwell any longer on 'that bone of contention the Declaratory Act of George I.,' asserting the right of the English Legislature to bind Ireland. There is an 'utter and universal despair among all descriptions of men of ever seeing that period when the right in question will ever be enforced on one hand or submitted to on the other. The proposed Bill [of Yelverton] takes a middle and a lenient course. . . . It has a friendly tendency and an honest meaning, . . . and holds out, in my poor judgment, a favourable and dignified opportunity to Great Britain at least to cut down this plant from which nothing wholesome will be ever gathered.' It is now passing through Committee, and 'those gentlemen, and Mr. Grattan in particular, considered the Bill to be a measure of conciliation facilitating the intended declaration of independent legislation which Mr. Grattan again gave notice should be moved by him immediately after the recess.' The conciliatory Act offered by the Government to America was again quoted as an example. 'Mr. Grattan said that the liberal allowance of new rights would for ever remove all rankling jealousies between the two countries. . . . I must add, that in all the debates upon this

[1] March 8, 1782. (Most secret.) Carlisle to Hillsborough.

[2] March 12, 1782. Hillsborough to Carlisle. (Most secret.)

subject, there has been a general expression of the most cordial wishes that Ireland should be considered as inseparably united in interests with Great Britain, and that the commerce of this kingdom should at all times be governed by regulations similar to those of Great Britain.'[1]

On March 14 the House adjourned for the Easter recess till April 16, and a few days after the adjournment Carlisle wrote a long and very striking letter reviewing the whole history of his Administration. When he first arrived in Ireland, he says, all respect essential to good government was obliterated from the minds of the lower classes of people; the higher ranks stood aloof from Administration, and such of the leading individuals as did not join the popular measures were in the practice of giving feeble and disjointed support to the Lord Lieutenant.' The manufacturers found themselves poor and helpless, and by no means the better for the trade laws. Grattan's declaration of independence was with difficulty 'postponed by assurances from the principal men in office, that England having desisted from the practice [of legislating for Ireland] it was unnecessary to declare against it. In this temper the session ended in September 1780, and the volunteer associations, which nearly trebled the established military force of the kingdom, . . . began to frame regular battalions, with troops of cavalry and trains of artillery.' They were not disloyal, but they might easily have become so; and it was constantly reported that the military preparations were made to defend Ireland from 'foreign and domestic enemies,' the latter term being tacitly construed to mean the enemies of parliamentary independence. To add to the difficulty of the situation, 'within four months of the time of my departure, five laws passed in the Eng-

[1] March 12, 1782. (Most secret.) Carlisle to Hillsborough.

lish Parliament to bind Ireland. As they related to subjects of little importance, I presume they passed from mere inadvertence.'

Carlisle had, however, taken every possible means to restore the action of the law. The alarm of French invasion enabled him to conciliate the volunteers. The leading people were to a great extent won over, and he had obtained in the present Parliament 'a system of support and demonstrations of regard more extensive and more steady than any Government here ever experienced.' Many good revenue laws were passed. 'The trying questions respecting the Mutiny Bill, Poyning's law, a proposed address on the Judges' Bill, the treaties with Portugal, &c., were all either negatived or postponed,' and the unanimous vote for a country residence showed the personal regard of the Commons for the Governor. In the midst of these transactions the late Acts binding Ireland were discovered and brought forward. Except that relating to marines, all were re-enacted by the Irish Parliament. But the alarm went through the country; 'the Dungannon meeting, which had been advertised by a small party of Presbyterians in the North without any decided object at the time, availed themselves of the occasion and founded their resolves upon it.' Flood and Grattan successively brought forward resolutions. 'The Lawyers' corps in Dublin were induced to adopt the Dungannon resolutions. . . . The popular ferment increased, and it was evident that combinations would soon take place to secure the property of Irish residents held under English Acts.' If Government resisted any longer it 'would infallibly lose all weight in the kingdom,' and all well-judging men considered it a very fortunate thing that the question had fallen into such moderate hands as those of Yelverton. 'The character and weight of his Majesty's Government are safe, and the public peace is

likely to be secured, if the present opening can be successfully used for the removal of all jealousies and apprehensions. It is beyond a doubt that the practicability of governing Ireland by English laws is become utterly visionary. It is with me equally beyond a doubt that Ireland may be well and happily governed by its own laws. It is, however, by no means so clear that if the present moment is neglected this country will not be driven into a state of confusion, the end of which no man can foresee or limit.'[1]

A week later he again wrote to Hillsborough, strongly urging 'the return of Mr. Yelverton's Bill without any material alteration.' 'I even venture,' he added, 'to submit that it may deserve the serious consideration of the ministers in whom his Majesty may place his confidence, whether the repeal of the 6 Geo. I. might not be a measure equally becoming and wise. . . . If the measure to which I have here adverted should take place, the line which I am to pursue will be plain and obvious. If, on the contrary, it should be thought inexpedient, I wish to know whether my Chief Secretary is expected to make any opposition to the motion which will be made by Mr. Grattan on April 16, declaratory of the independence of the Irish Parliament. I have in former letters observed to your lordship that my Government on every other point has the support of a most respectable and very large majority, and even resisted this particular question in several shapes in the course of the present session, but that under the universal eagerness which has taken place through the kingdom to have this claim decided, I cannot expect the friends of Administration to sacrifice for ever their weight among their countrymen by a resistance which would possibly lead to serious consequences.'[2] The grand

[1] March 19, 1782. (Private.) Carlisle to Hillsborough.

[2] March 27, 1782. Carlisle to Hillsborough.

juries through the country were everywhere passing resolutions declaring the sole right of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland to pass laws for Ireland, and demanding the repeal of Poyning's law. 'The friends of Government who might be supposed to support tenets contrary to the principle of independent legislation would lose their weight in this country if that point should remain long undecided. The volunteer associations (already in some places made use of in electioneering purposes) have set the example in the county of Galway by withdrawing themselves from the command of Mr. Daly, and of other gentlemen who have shown themselves well-wishers of Administration. . . . It is my serious opinion that if the first day of the next meeting of Parliament does not quiet the minds of the people on that point, hardly a friend of Government will have any prospect of holding his seat for a county or popular corporation, and what is more immediately interesting, they will also lose their present subsisting influence over the armed Associations.'[1]

The letters from which I have now so largely quoted appear to me those of an eminently honest and well-meaning man, and of a man who had a very considerable insight into the true conditions of Irish politics. Personally, Lord Carlisle seems to have been much respected, and I cannot attribute the large amount of support his Government obtained in Parliament, solely or even mainly to corrupt motives. There are no signs in this Administration of the wholesale corruption which was practised under its predecessor, and the timidity and procrastination, the strange contrasts between speeches and votes that may be found in the majority, were probably largely due to the fact that many who wished to see legislative independence in Ireland were still more

[1] Carlisle to Hillsborough, March 28, 1782.

anxious that it should be effected by the initiative of the Government, without weakening the Executive or disturbing the good relations between the two countries.

The popular movement which was pressing on irresistibly to a triumphant issue we have hitherto looked upon chiefly as it is revealed in the despatches of the Government, and it is obvious that such a medium is an exceedingly unfavourable one. Every administrator has inevitably a certain bias against the opponents of his policy, and in describing them he is tolerably sure to underrate either their honesty, their ability, or their power. Yet even looked at through this disadvantageous medium the national movement in Ireland will, I think, appear worthy of a very high degree of admiration. Some slight traces of personal ambition and a good deal of boastfulness and extravagance of language may no doubt be descried, but on the whole few great movements of prolonged popular excitement have been conducted with so much sagacity and self-restraint, and have been disfigured by so little violence or corruption or crime. Charlemont and Grattan, in the purity of their motives and in the high quality of their patriotism, were not inferior to Hampden or Washington. The great unpaid armed force which the necessities of the country had evoked,—self-constituted, self-governed, and for the most part self-armed,—was guilty of absolutely no acts of violence, while it was discharging functions of the highest utility. It had made the country thoroughly defensible and had probably saved it from invasion. It had attained a degree of discipline, which though no doubt inferior to that of a regular army, made it for defensive purposes exceedingly formidable. It was everywhere employed in necessary police functions, guarding gaols, escorting prisoners, keeping order at public meetings, securing property. It had chosen and steadily maintained at its head men

who in character and property were among the foremost in the country, and for a long space of time its different corps had acted together with a remarkable harmony. With the exception of a single riot in Dublin, we have found no trace of that ill usage of unpopular politicians which was so conspicuous in the corresponding movement in America, while under the influence of the national spirit animosities of the most dangerous and inveterate character were rapidly fading. The hostility of the Anglican to the Presbyterian seemed to have wholly ceased; the division between the Protestant and Catholic had greatly diminished. Hitherto the two great ends of the Irish patriots had been steadily maintained and cordially combined. They were resolved to obtain for their country the constitutional freedom which England had secured by the Revolution of 1688, and they were no less firmly resolved to preserve a sincere, strenuous, and fruitful loyalty to the Crown and to the connection.

The establishment of legislative independence had become inevitable from the simple impossibility of governing Ireland on any other condition. The overwhelming majority of the classes in whose hands the administration of the country practically lay, were determined to obtain it, and no Government could have long delayed it; but the merit or the humiliation of conceding it was not reserved for the Administration of Lord Carlisle. Before the Irish Parliament met after the Easter recess the Government of Lord North had fallen. The disasters in America had struck a deathblow to its popularity; in division after division its supporters steadily diminished, and on the 20th of March Lord North announced that the ministry only held office till their successors were appointed. Rockingham became First Lord of the Treasury, Fox and Shelburne were Secretaries of State. Lord Carlisle

was removed with circumstances of great abruptness and discourtesy from the government of Ireland; the Duke of Portland was appointed in his place, and Mr. Fitzpatrick accompanied him as Chief Secretary.

The men who now rose to power had long advocated the claims of America on those Whig principles which were the basis of the claims of Ireland to self-legislation. Rockingham and Fox, as well as Burke, were intimate friends of Charlemont, the leader of the volunteers. On April 8 the English Parliament met, and on that very day an attempt was made from an unexpected quarter to force the hand of the Government on the question of Ireland. Lord Carmarthen had been removed by the late Administration from the Lieutenancy of the East Riding of Yorkshire, and Lord Carlisle had been appointed in his place. One of the first acts of the new Government was to remove Carlisle and replace Carmarthen. Eden had just come to England with the resignation of the Viceroy, and he resented bitterly, and resolved to revenge, the manner in which his chief was treated. He refused positively to hold any communication with the new Government, and availing himself of the seat which he still held in the English House of Commons, he appeared there on the first day of its assembly, and after a vehement speech in which he described the overwhelming power of the volunteers, the unanimity of Irish opinion, and the impossiblity of withholding independence, he gave notice of his intention to move a repeal of the Declaratory Act of George I. Such a notice, emanating at such a time from a late Chief Secretary who had been officially employed in resisting the motions for independence, was extremely embarrassing to the Government, and Fox in a very powerful speech rebuked the attempt to hurry the ministry into a premature disclosure of their designs. Next day a Royal message

was sent to both Houses deploring the discontent prevailing in Ireland, and calling on Parliament to take it into consideration, 'in order to such a final adjustment as may give mutual satisfaction to both kingdoms.'

In Ireland a special summons in a very unusual form had been already issued by the Speaker at the direction of the House, ordering the members to attend on April 16, the day following the Easter recess, 'as they tender the rights of the Irish Parliament.' As the Duke of Portland and Mr. Fitzpatrick only arrived in Ireland on the 14th, great efforts were made to procure an adjournment for a fortnight or three weeks, in order to enable them to master the situation of the country before Parliament had taken any decisive line, and both Fox and Rockingham wrote strongly to Charlemont in this sense. Grattan was still very ill, having lately undergone a painful surgical operation, but he refused to allow any adjournment, declaring that the expectations of the country had been raised to the highest point by the very unusual call of the House, that the proposed measures were now public property, and that whatever course Government chose to take, Parliament owed it to itself and to the country to lose no time in asserting the claims of Ireland.[1] Both Charlemont and Grattan agreed in this course, and they both refused the offers of the Government to take office.

Their course was probably a prudent one, for it is quite evident from the confidential letters of the Duke of Portland that he was anxious to yield as little as possible, and it is probable that a delay would have created widespread suspicion, and have led to much manœuvring hostile to the popular party. Dublin was full of volunteers who had come up for an approaching review, and on the 16th they paraded the streets and

[1] Grattan's *Life*, ii. 213–227.

lined the path through which Grattan passed to move the legislative independence of Ireland. The nation was wound up to the highest pitch of excitement. Many thousands of spectators filled the streets, but there was no tumult or disorder. The spacious galleries of the House were crowded with all that was most brilliant and weighty in Dublin society, and in the body of the House scarcely a seat was vacant. Portland had refused to adopt the declaration of independence, or to commit himself to any definite line of policy, but a message from him was read to the House by Hely Hutchinson, now Secretary of State, to the effect that 'His Majesty, being concerned to find that discontents and jealousies were prevailing among his loyal subjects in Ireland upon matters of great weight and importance, recommended to the House to take the same into their most serious consideration, in order to effect such a final adjustment as might give mutual satisfaction to his kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland.' Hutchinson accompanied the message with a few words in which, while disclaiming all authority from the Lord Lieutenant, he expressed his personal sympathy with the popular cause. A formal reply, thanking the King for his goodness and condescension, and assuring him that the Commons would act on his recommendation, was moved by George Ponsonby, and it was then that, after a short pause, Grattan rose to move as an amendment a declaration of rights and grievances.

He was still pale and weak from recent illness, and his appearance denoted the evident anxiety of his mind, but as he proceeded his voice gathered strength, and the fire of a great orator acting on a highly excited and sympathetic audience, soon produced even more than its wonted effects. The strange swaying gestures, which were habitual to him, were compared by one

observer to the action of the mower as his scythe sweeps through the long grass, and by another to the rolling of a ship in a heavy swell; but he possessed beyond all other orators the peculiar gift of illuminating a subject with an almost lightning-like intensity, and his speeches, with much that is exaggerated and overstrained, contain some of the finest examples in the English language of great energy and vividness, and condensed felicity of expression. On the present occasion he knew that the Parliament was with him, and he treated the victory as already won. He described in a few picturesque words the progress of the nation 'from injuries to arms, and from arms to liberty,' till 'the whole faculty of the nation was braced up to the act of her own deliverance,' and the spirit of Swift and of Molyneux had prevailed; and then, after a very exaggerated but perhaps not impolitic eulogy of the Parliament and public of Ireland, he touched with much discrimination on the services of the volunteers to the cause he was defending. 'It was not the sword of the volunteer, nor his muster, nor his spirit, nor his promptitude to put down accidental disturbance or public disorder, nor his own unblamed and distinguished deportment. This was much, but there was more than this. The upper orders, the property, and the abilities of the country formed with the volunteer, and the volunteer had sense enough to obey them. This united the Protestant with the Catholic, and the landed proprietor with the people. There was still more than this. There was a continence which confined the corps to limited and legitimate objects. . . . No vulgar rant against England, no mysterious admiration of France. . . . They were what they professed to be, nothing less than the society, asserting her liberty according to the frame of the British Constitution, her inheritance to be enjoyed in perpetual connection with the British

Empire. . . . And now having given a Parliament to the people, the volunteers will, I doubt not, leave the people to Parliament, and thus close specifically and majestically a great work. . . . Their associations, like other institutions, will perish; they will perish with the occasion that gave them being, and the gratitude of their country will write their epitaph. . . . Connected by freedom as well as by allegiance, the two nations, Great Britain and Ireland, form a constitutional confederacy as well as one empire. The Crown is one link, the Constitution another, and in my mind the latter link is the most powerful. You can get a king anywhere, but England is the only country with whom you can participate a free constitution.'

He concluded by moving an address to the King, asserting that while the crown of Ireland was inseparably united to that of England, Ireland was by right a distinct kingdom, that her King, Lords, and Commons, and these alone, had a right to bind her, and that the discontents and jealousies of the nation were chiefly due to three great infringements of her freedom. These were the claims advanced by the British Parliament in the Act of George I. to legislate for Ireland and exercise a right of final judicature; the power exercised under Poyning's law by the Privy Council to suppress or alter Irish Bills, and the perpetual Mutiny Act, which placed the Irish army beyond the control of the Irish Parliament. The address concluded with reminding his Majesty that 'the people of this kingdom have never expressed a desire to share the freedom of England without declaring a determination to share her fate likewise, standing or falling with the British nation.' [1]

The address was seconded by Brownlow, and it passed unanimously. A few days later the House adjourned to

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 123–130. Commons' *Journals*, xx. 352, 353.

the 4th, and then to the 27th of May, to await the King's reply to their addresses. Meanwhile the volunteer corps all over Ireland were sending up resolutions thanking Grattan and the Parliament for their declaration, and pledging themselves to support the demands it contained with their 'lives and fortunes,' and the grand juries in many counties took a similar step.

To understand the true feelings of the Government we must pass once more into the Viceregal Cabinet, and examine the letters in which Portland confidentially reported to the ministers the state of the country. Immediately after his arrival we find him complaining to Shelburne that 'heats and passions' 'have taken a much stronger and fuller possession of the people here than your lordship or any person on the other side of the water can possibly be aware of,' deploring 'the absolute submission which is paid to the volunteers by every rank and order of men,' and to Grattan as their mouthpiece, and concluding that nothing will restore quiet to the country short of a modification of Poyning's law, and 'such a relaxation of the 6 Geo. I. respecting the legislation, which is the great object upon which the expectations of the whole country are fixed, as may render it independent of the Legislature of Great Britain with respect to the interior government of this country, and the alteration of the present Mutiny Act.'[1] 'Although the question of independent legislation had been four times agitated in the space of the last two years, only one man among all the servants of the Crown and the numerous and zealous friends of Government was bold enough to resist the doctrine of right. All the others that composed that corps fled from the question, and skulked either under the improbability of Great Britain attempting it, or the impossibility of her exercising it.'[2]

[1] Portland to Shelburne, April 16, 1782. [2] Ibid. April 24, 1782.

Portland was much struck and mortified by observing how little the Irish Parliament moved in the lines of English parties, how little its members attributed any concessions to the change of ministry, and how sincere a respect they entertained for Lord Carlisle. Grattan, indeed, identified himself to a great degree, and Charlemont to a still greater, with the Whig party, but in general the change of Government was not deemed, from an Irish point of view, a matter of any material moment. Parliament passed a warm vote of thanks to Lord Carlisle for his conduct when administering Ireland, and it was commonly believed that it was the intention of the late ministry 'to renounce the right, and that they only waited till matters were ripe.' 'You are not,' Portland said, 'considered here better friends to the Constitution . . . than your predecessors.' It is the almost universal foible of Irish members to speak of 'the uniform support' they have 'given to English Government.' 'By this sort of conduct the distinction between administration and government is so totally lost that it can hardly be said to exist . . . Gentlemen being strongly impressed with the justice of their claims and satisfied of the pretended disposition of the last Administration, have construed the assurances I was empowered to give them of the good wishes of the present ministers not as the consequence of a revolution in their favour, but as the execution of the plan which they had forced their preceding Governor to adopt.' 'I have had the mortification of observing the public expectation of carrying all the points stated in the addresses of the two Houses acquires daily strength, insomuch that I can give little or no hope of their receding upon any one of them.' 'There is not a difference of opinion respecting the universality of the expectations. . . . It is no longer the Parliament of Ireland that is to be managed or attended to. It is the whole of this country. It is the

Church, the law, the army, I fear, when I consider how it is composed, the merchant, the tradesman, the manufacturer, the farmer, the labourer, the Catholic, the Dissenter, the Protestant, all sects, all sorts and descriptions of men, who, I think, mistakenly upon some points, but still unanimously and most audibly, call upon Great Britain for a full and unequivocal satisfaction.' The rumours of an approaching peace are 'a matter of perfect indifference to them with regard to the subject matter of their demands. They know and feel their strength, and are equally sensible of your situation and resources. They are not so ignorant of the effects of a peace as not to be convinced that if you had the good fortune to conclude one to-morrow, it would not be in your power to send over such a force as would compel them to relinquish their claims, and having so recent an example of the fatal consequences of coercive measures before you, they are in no fear that Great Britain will attempt a second experiment of the same sort. But to do them the justice they deserve, I think I may assert that they have still so much confidence in the magnanimity, generosity, and wisdom of the English nation as to believe that the redress they ask depends not upon any foreign or domestic occurrence. . . . I undertook this important and arduous employment with hopes which I had soon the mortification to be obliged to relinquish.' If the Irish demands were now refused, 'there would be an end of all government.'[1]

A few days later, Portland expressed his hope that if the material points in the addresses were conceded, 'the royal favours may be dispensed in this kingdom with a more sparing and economical hand;' that 'the honour of serving the Crown may take precedence of

[1] April 24, 1782. Portland to Shelburne.

the endowments to which I fear the attention of the King's servants in this kingdom has been of late too much fixed;' and he added his conviction that the Irish people 'will, if properly directed, return the generosity of his Majesty and the Parliament of Great Britain tenfold into the bosom of their friends and protectors.'[1] He made no secret to the Government of his extreme dislike to the Constitution he recommended. 'Though I feel the strongest and most poignant reluctance in being obliged to recommend the mode of relation which I have taken the liberty to suggest, I see no other resource, for I am convinced that the spirit of this country is raised so high that she would expose herself to any hazard rather than relinquish or retract any of the claims she has insisted on through her Parliament;'[2] but he fully agreed with Shelburne that a negotiation should be entered into with commissioners authorised by the Irish Parliament, to determine finally and definitely the exact limits of the independence, the superintending power of England in matters of trade, the consideration to be given by Ireland for protection, and the amount of her contribution to the general support of the Empire. Without some such arrangement he even doubted whether the country would be worth possessing.[3] Such a distinct agreement Shelburne strongly maintained was necessary to put an end to all further disputes between the two countries, to give a unity to their policy, and to attach them in their new conditions by a firm bond of connection.[4]

Grattan, however—as I conceive very unwisely—refused to enter at this time into any such treaty. He urged that the Irish declaration related to matter of

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[1] April 27, 1782. Portland to Shelburne.

[2] May 6, 1782. Ibid.

[3] May 6, 1782. Ibid.

[4] Shelburne to Portland, May 18, 1782.

right, and would therefore be compromised if it were made the subject of negotiation and barter. He shared with most Irishmen a strong dread lest what was given should be indirectly drawn back, lest the full competence of the Irish Parliament to determine the policy and dispose of the resources of the country should be abridged, lest it should be bound by rules which placed it on a lower plane of authority than the Parliament in England. 'We cannot,' he said, 'establish perpetual regulations more favourable to England than to Ireland with regard to commerce, a fluctuating subject which cannot be ruled but by occasional laws.' He spoke of 'the alienated sentiment which a negative, or a negotiation founded on an ultimatum would inspire;' of the inevitable tendency of a negotiation at this moment to throw the nation into a defensive attitude, to prolong a crisis which it was necessary for the peace of both countries to terminate as quickly as possible, to arouse suspicions and to impair gratitude. For the present, at least, he chose that the bond between England and Ireland should be in law of no other kind than that which in our own day binds England to Canada or her Australian colonies, and that the support Ireland gave to England in war should be a free and an unstipulated act.[1]

It was plain that whatever negotiations were made they must be subsequent to a surrender by England of the chief points at issue. We have committed ourselves, Grattan wrote to Fox, only to measures which are indispensable to our freedom, and which you have thought indispensable to yours. 'The powers, legislative and jurisdictive,' claimed by England, 'are become impracticable. We have rendered them so ourselves, and all we ask of England is that she will withdraw a barren

[1] See his letter to Day (April 22), Grattan's *Life*, ii. 249–252.

claim, that we may shake hands with her.'[1] 'If you delay, or refuse to be liberal,' wrote the Duke of Portland, 'Government cannot exist here in its present form, and the sooner you recall your Lieutenant and renounce all claim to this country the better. But, on the contrary, if you can bring your minds to concede largely and handsomely, I am persuaded that you may make any use of this people, and of everything that they are worth, that you can wish.'[2]

In accordance with this opinion resolutions were brought forward on May 17, in the British House of Lords by Shelburne, and in the British House of Commons by Fox, for the purpose of giving satisfaction to Ireland. The first resolution announced the opinion of the House that the Declaratory Act of George I. should be repealed. The second stated that 'it was indispensable to the interest and happiness of both kingdoms that the connection between them should be established by mutual consent upon a solid and permanent footing, and that an humble address should be presented to his Majesty that his Majesty will be graciously pleased to take such measures as his Majesty in his royal wisdom should think most conducive to that important end.' Lord Carlisle was one of the first to express his warm approval of these resolutions, and he bore ample testimony to the zeal and loyalty of the Irish, and to the services of the volunteers during his administration. In the Commons, Fox enumerated the different demands of the Irish, and announced the resolution of the Government to concede them absolutely and unconditionally. They were determined to repeal the Declaratory Act of George I., to abandon the appellate jurisdiction of the English House of Lords, to consent to such a modification of Poyning's law as would annihilate the excep-

[1] Grattan's *Life*, ii. 243–250.

[2] Ibid. pp. 274, 275. (Private and confidential.)

tional powers of the two Privy Councils, and to limit the Mutiny Act. He would 'meet Ireland on her own terms and give her everything she wanted in the way she herself seemed to wish for it.' At the same time he intimated that a formal treaty should be made between England and Ireland 'establishing on a firm and solid basis the future connection of the two kingdoms.' At present, however, he proposed no such treaty, and contented himself with suggesting that commissioners might at some future time be appointed to negotiate it. Of the volunteers he spoke with warm eulogy. 'They had acted with temper and moderation notwithstanding their steadiness, and . . . had not done a single act for which they had not his veneration and respect.' 'The intestine divisions of Ireland,' he added, 'are no more; the religious prejudices of the age are forgotten, and the Roman Catholics, being restored to the rights of men and citizens, would become an accession of strength and wealth to the Empire at large, instead of being a burthen to the land that bore them.'[1]

It is a striking proof both of the necessity of these concessions and of the grace and dignity with which that necessity was accepted, that the two resolutions I have cited passed unanimously through the House of Commons, and with the single negative of Lord Loughborough, through the House of Lords.

The promises of Fox were fully kept; a Bill repealing the 6 Geo. I. was at once introduced, and in due course carried through the English Parliament, and when the Irish Parliament met on May 27, 1782, the Duke of Portland was instructed to announce to it that the King was prepared to give his unconditional assent 'to Acts to prevent the suppression of Bills in the Privy Council of this kingdom, and the alteration of them

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 17–48.

anywhere,' and to limit the duration of the Mutiny Act to two years. Grattan, immediately after the Speech from the Throne was read, rose to move an address of thanks and to express in the strongest terms his full satisfaction with what was done. 'I understand,' he said, 'that Great Britain gives up *in toto* every claim to authority over Ireland. I have not the least idea that in repealing the 6 Geo. I. Great Britain should be bound to make any declaration that she had formerly usurped a power. This would be a foolish caution, a dishonourable condition, and the nation that insists upon the humiliation of another is a foolish nation. . . . Another point of great magnanimity in the conduct of Britain is that everything is given up unconditionally. This must for ever remove suspicion. . . . The whole tenour of the conduct of the British Minister towards us has been most generous and sincere.'[1] The address stated the full satisfaction of Parliament, and contained words which afterwards occasioned much discussion. 'We do assure his Majesty that no constitutional question between the two nations will any longer exist which can interrupt this harmony, and that Great Britain, as she has approved of our firmness, so may she rely on our affection.' The first clause of this paragraph did not pass without some adverse comment, but two members only voted against it.[2]

The remaining proceedings of the Irish Parliament during this memorable Administration, though very important, may be briefly told. It in the first place

[1] Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 132–134.

[2] It is plain that the phrase was not resented by the Government, for in the answer of the King to the address, he said: 'The declarations of the House of Commons that no constitutional question between the two countries will any longer exist, that can interrupt their harmony, and that Great Britain may rely on their affections, are very pleasing to his Majesty.'—Commons' *Journals*, xx. 404.

evinced its gratitude to Almighty God by a day of thanksgiving 'for the many blessings of late bestowed on this kingdom, and particularly for that union, harmony, and cordial affection happily subsisting between the two kingdoms,' and also its gratitude to England by voting 100,000*l.* towards furnishing 20,000 additional sailors for the British navy. Grattan himself, who was, as he said, 'desirous above all things next to the liberty of the country, not to accustom the Irish mind, to an alien or suspicious habit with regard to Great Britain,'[1] moved the latter resolution, and the volunteers pledged themselves in their different counties to employ their influence in raising the recruits.

Shelburne warmly acknowledged this timely assistance,[2] but he desired something more. He had never cordially acquiesced in the pledge which England had given under Lord Townshend, that 12,000 of the troops on the Irish establishment should be always kept in Ireland for its defence, except in case of actual invasion or rebellion in England, and he now sounded Portland as to the possibility of modifying or cancelling the engagement.[3] There was no information, he said, of any intended attack on Ireland, but there was great fear of a sudden attack on the English seaports while the fleet continued inferior to that of the enemy, and in this case there were neither troops nor fortifications in England suffi-

[1] Grattan's *Life*, ii. 251, 252.

[2] 'Words could scarcely do justice to the grateful sense of Ireland on the occasion. . . . He believed he might assure the House that Ireland had resolved on a very extraordinary proof of its gratitude, no less than giving 20,000 seamen to the British navy. Such a gift as that was a solid, substantial, and real advantage. It would tell abroad, and could not fail to prove of the most essential service to Great Britain. This, therefore, proved that Ireland was satisfied; indeed it was agreed in that kingdom that there now remained no other constitutional point to be settled between the two countries.'—*Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 94.

[3] June 8, 1782. (Secret.) Shelburne to Portland.

cient for its defence. It was greatly to be wished that England could avail herself of some of the regular forces now in Ireland if means could be discovered 'for getting over any difficulty arising from the engagements formerly entered into, which, however unadvisable and unwarrantable at the time, require to be attended to.'

The Irish Parliament at once acceded to the wishes of the minister, and authorised the King at any time before December 25, 1783, to withdraw from Ireland an additional force of 5,000 men.[1] The measure was far from pleasing to Portland, for it threw the country almost wholly into the hands of the volunteers, and Portland, though he was carrying out a popular policy, looked upon that force with much more jealousy and dislike than his predecessor. He represented to the Government that if 5,000 troops were withdrawn there would not be sufficient in Ireland for the country guards; that 'although the volunteers had uniformly and very much to their credit been ready to co-operate with the civil magistrate in enforcing obedience to the laws,' he 'had great reason to doubt of the same disposition being shown in support of the revenue officers;' that they had so little camp equipage that few in case of invasion could be employed at distances from their neighbourhoods; that they were not likely to take commissions under the Crown, or to place themselves under the Articles of War; that they were chiefly concentrated in Ulster, and that Munster was the province most liable to invasion.[2] Ultimately, however, 3,245 troops out of the 5,000 were sent to England.[3]

Another class of measures which were now brought to a completion dealt with the disabilities that divided different sections of Irishmen. The penal laws against the Catholics had been a great subject of discussion

[1] 21 & 22 George III. c. 58.
[2] July 18, 1782. Portland to Townshend.
[3] July 31, 1782. Ibid.

during the Administration of Carlisle, but it was only in the succeeding Administration that the contemplated measures were finally carried. There was a general agreement in Parliament that the policy of reconciliation which had inspired the Relief Bill of 1778 should be extended, but there was much difference as to the degree, and there was a strong, and at this time successful opposition, supported by Flood in the Commons and by the bishops in the Lords, to giving Catholics any measure of political power. The penal laws formed so large and complicated a system that Gardiner thought it advisable to divide his propositions into three Bills. The first, which was called 'An Act for the further relief of his Majesty's subjects professing the Popish religion,'[1] applied to all Catholics who had taken the oath of allegiance and the declaration enacted under Lord Harcourt. It enabled them to purchase and bequeath land like Protestants, provided it was not in a parliamentary borough. It abolished a number of obsolete laws making it penal for Catholic bishops or regulars to subsist in the country, subjecting priests to the necessity of registration, enabling any two justices of the peace to oblige Catholics to declare on oath where they last heard mass, and forbidding Catholics to live in Limerick or Galway. These concessions, however, were encumbered with some slight restrictions, and the Act expressly reaffirmed the provisions against proselytism, against perversion to Catholicism, against Catholics assuming ecclesiastical titles or rank, or wearing vestments outside the precincts of their chapels, against chapels having steeples or bells, and against priests officiating anywhere except in their accustomed places of worship. Some grossly oppressive enactments which were still in force were at the same time repealed. A

[1] 21 & 22 George III. c. 24.

Protestant could no longer appropriate the horse of his Catholic neighbour if he tendered him 5*l*. Horses of Catholics could no longer be seized at every alarm of invasion. Catholics were no longer obliged to provide Protestant watchmen at their own expense, or to reimburse the damage done by the privateers of an enemy. By a second Bill [1] they were allowed to become schoolmasters, ushers, and private tutors, provided they took the oath of allegiance, subscribed the declaration, received a licence from the ordinary, and took no Protestant pupils. A Popish university or college, or endowed school, was still forbidden in Ireland, but Catholic laymen were now permitted to be guardians to Catholic children.

These two measures became law, but a third, intended to legalise intermarriages between Protestants and Catholics, was ultimately defeated. The Administrations of Carlisle and Portland refused to adopt the Catholic Bills, but they were on the whole very favourable to them, and Grattan and some of the more conspicuous members of his party would have carried them much further. 'The question is now,' Grattan said, 'whether we shall be a Protestant settlement or an Irish nation, . . . for so long as we exclude Catholics from natural liberty and the common rights of man we are not a people.' . . . As the mover of the Declaration of Rights, I should be ashamed of giving freedom to but 600,000 of my fellow-countrymen, when I could extend it to two millions more.' Experience has not verified Grattan's anticipations of the results that would follow from bringing Catholics within the pale of the Constitution, but those anticipations appeared extremely probable in the state of religious thought prevailing before the great convulsions of the French Revolution.

[1] 21 & 22 George III. c. 62.

'The indulgence,' he said, 'we wish to give to Catholics can never be injurious to the Protestant religion. That religion is the religion of the State, and will become the religion of Catholics if severity does not prevent them. Bigotry may survive persecution, but it can never survive toleration. Gentlemen who speak of the enormities committed by Catholics . . . do not take into account the enlightening and softening of men's minds by toleration; nor do they consider that as they increase in wealth they will increase in learning and politeness.'[1] The opposition to carrying measures in favour of the Catholics further than Gardiner's Bills was exceedingly powerful, for it comprised nearly all the bishops, some of the principal borough owners, and also Charlemont and Flood. There was a general feeling that the repeal of the penal laws should be effected by degrees, and the Relief Bills of 1778 and of 1782 did undoubtedly mark two great stages in the direction both of religious toleration and of national unity.

In the same session the last serious grievance of the Protestant Dissenters was removed. They had already been freed from the vexatious prosecutions and penalties to which they had been liable on account of the marriages celebrated in their meeting-houses by their ministers, but the legal validity of those marriages was very doubtful. A short Act was now passed to set those doubts at rest, and to give Protestant dissenting ministers, as far as their co-religionists were concerned, the same right of celebrating valid marriages as Anglican clergymen.[2] It is worthy of notice that it was only

[1] *Parl. Debates*, i. 257–259. So in a speech on tithes a few years later, he said: 'What Luther did for us philosophy has done in some degree for the Roman Catholics, and their religion has undergone a silent reformation; and both divisions of Christianity, unless they have lost their understanding, must have lost their animosity though they have retained their distinctions.'

[2] 21 & 22 George III. c. 25.

in 1836 that the Imperial Parliament, under the influence of Lord John Russell, granted a similar boon to the Dissenters in England.

Acts were at the same time passed repealing the greater part of Poyning's law, confirming a large number of British statutes relating to Ireland, limiting the Mutiny Act, and establishing the right of final judicature in Ireland, and the independence of the Irish judges.[1] One other measure also was taken of a different kind. The man who during the last anxious years had stood forth from his countrymen beyond all rivalry and all comparison was Henry Grattan. His splendid eloquence, the perfect confidence which was felt in his honour and in his disinterestedness, the signal skill, energy, and moderation with which he had at once animated and controlled the patriotic party, were universally acknowledged, and at this time, almost universally admired. He had shown that it was possible to combine very ardent attachment to Irish interests with a not less loyal devotion to the connection, and to conduct a great popular movement without any of the violence, the dishonesty, or the untruthfulness of a demagogue or an agitator. One of the most incontestable signs of the profound degradation of modern political opinion in Ireland is the class of men who have risen to be popular idols. One of the best signs of the Ireland of 1782 was the ardour with which popular gratitude still centred upon Grattan. The son of the Recorder of Dublin, he was a man of good family, but of very modest patrimonial estate, and as he had refused the offers of the Government, and had announced his intention to accept no office carrying emoluments, he was quite prepared to resume his profession as a

[1] 21 & 22 George III. c. 43, 47, 48, 49, 50.

barrister; but Parliament, expressing in this respect most faithfully the general sentiment of the country, determined to bestow on him such a gift as would at once mark the gratitude of the nation for his services and enable him to devote his undivided energies to political life. Without the consent or knowledge of the intimate personal friends of Grattan, Bagenal, one of the members for the county of Carlow, moved that a grant of 100,000*l.* should be made to Grattan, and the proposition was unanimously accepted; but Grattan's particular friends at his instance interposed, and declared that nothing would induce him to accept such a grant. At last, however, after some discussion, and acting on the advice of his friends, and upon the urgent wish of the Parliament, he agreed to accept 50,000*l.*, and from this time he gave up all thought of practising at the bar, and devoted himself exclusively to the service of his country.[1] Government would gladly have attached him to themselves by rewarding him from the pension list, and Portland even offered to confer upon him the new Viceregal Lodge in Phœnix Park, but he soon found that these offers were wholly unacceptable.[2]

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[1] 'Nothing could have prevented the vote in favour of Mr. Grattan amounting to as large a sum, or possibly exceeding that given towards raising seamen, but the interposition and firmness of Mr. Grattan's own particular friends, who assured the House that Mr. Grattan himself would be very unwilling to accept anything, and would certainly refuse so glaring a mark of profusion.'—June 5, 1782. (Private.) Portland to Shelburne. See, too, on this grant, Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xi. Grattan's *Life* ii. 304, 305.

[2] The merits of this offer are somewhat diminished by the following paragraph relating to it in Portland's confidential correspondence with Shelburne: 'For this I was the more anxious, as in addition to the very extravagant price the public has agreed to pay for it, I am persuaded that it will require at least 10,000*l.* to make it fit for the reception of any chief governor.' —Portland to Shelburne, June 5, 1782.

In this manner, without the effusion of one drop of blood, and with singularly little of violence and disorder, the whole Constitution of Ireland was changed, and a great revolution was accomplished, which Burke described without exaggeration as the Irish analogue of the English Revolution of 1688. Abuses, perplexities, and dangers no doubt lay thickly around the infant Constitution. The extreme difficulty of making it work in harmony with the Parliament of England; the excessive concentration of political power in a very few hands; religious and historical antipathies, great ignorance and great poverty, the exclusion of more than three-fourths of the population from all political rights, scandalous abuses of patronage, and many forms both of corruption and of anarchy, still continued. Yet when all this is admitted, a noble work had been nobly achieved. Ireland from the slave of England had now risen to the dignity of independence. She participated at last in all that was best in the English Constitution. Her religious animosities were rapidly fading beneath the strong national sentiment which had arisen, assisted by the intellectual tendencies of an eminently tolerant age. She had regained her freedom both of commerce and manufacture, and might reasonably hope with returning peace to attain some measure of material prosperity. After a long winter of oppression and misery, the sunlight of hope shone brightly upon her, and a new spirit of patriotism and self-reliance had begun to animate her people. Nor had her loyalty to England ever shown itself more earnest or more efficacious. The intellect, the property, the respectability of the country still led the popular movement, and as long as this continued no serious disloyalty was to be apprehended. A remarkable letter written at this time by Burke to Charlemont expressed with much vividness the prevailing sentiments of the best Irishmen. 'I assure you,'

he said, 'that I take a sincere part in the general joy, and hope that mutual affection will do more for mutual help and mutual advantage between the two kingdoms than any ties of artificial connection. . . . I am convinced that no reluctant tie can be a strong one, and that a natural cheerful alliance will be a far securer link of connection than any principle of subordination borne with grudging and discontent.'[1]

[1] Grattan's *Life*, ii. 301.

CHAPTER V.

1782–1789.

THE victory which had been achieved by the Irish popular party in 1782 was a great one, but many elements of disquietude were abroad. An agitation so violent, so prolonged, and so successful, could hardly be expected suddenly to subside, and it is a law of human nature, that a great transport of triumph and of gratitude must be followed by some measure of reaction. Disappointed ambitions, chimerical hopes, turbulent agitators thrust into an unhealthy prominence, the dangerous precedent of an armed body controlling or overawing the deliberations of Parliament, the appetite for political excitement to which Irishmen have always been so prone, and which ever grows by indulgence, the very novelty and strangeness of the situation, all contributed to impart a certain feverish restlessness to the public mind. Unfortunately, too, one of the foremost of Irish politicians was profoundly discontented. Flood, who had been the earliest, and, for a long period, by far the most conspicuous advocate of the independence of the Irish Parliament, found himself completely eclipsed by a younger rival. He had lost his seat in the Privy Council, his dignity of Vice-Treasurer, and his salary of 3,500*l.* a year, but he had not regained his parliamentary ascendency. All the more important constitutional questions were occupied by other, and usually by younger, men. He was disliked by the Government

and distrusted by the Parliament. Even his eloquence had lost something of its old power, and by too frequent speaking in opposition to the sense of the House, he had often alienated or irritated his hearers.

Yelverton was made Attorney-General, and Burgh Prime Serjeant, but the Government had no wish to restore Flood to his office, though they were willing to replace him in the Privy Council. Their intentions, however, in this respect were frustrated by a curious blunder. One of the most remarkable facts in this period of Irish history is the number of false steps which were due, not to any miscalculations of leading statesmen, but simply to the carelessness of subordinate officials. We have already seen that the insertion of Ireland in four or five very insignificant British Acts, at a most critical moment and in defiance of the warnings of the Viceroy, had been one of the chief circumstances in creating the violent demand for independence, and that, in the opinion of Lord Carlisle, this insertion was due to pure inadvertence, official draughtsmen having probably copied the forms of previous Acts.[1] In 1782 the Government at last consented, after a long struggle, to accept the Bill making the judges removable only by the address of the two Houses of Parliament in Ireland, and to relinquish the disputed clause making the concurrence of the Irish Privy Council indispensable; but the Bill had scarcely been returned from England, when Shelburne wrote in much alarm to Portland that he had discovered that, 'by a mere mistake of the Council Office,' the very clause which was the subject-matter of dispute had been inserted, though 'it was not intended to have been adopted by the Committee of Privy Council,' and he begged the Lord Lieutenant to take such measures that no bad consequences should follow

[1] See p. 292.

from the error.[1] In the dealings with Flood a much more serious mistake was made. The Lord Lieutenant thought it very desirable to enter into negotiation with him, and he wished to be authorised in the course of this negotiation, if he thought it expedient, to offer Flood a seat in the Privy Council; but a clerk by some strange mistake sent the nomination which was meant to be conditional, and at the option of the Lord Lieutenant, directly to the 'Gazette,' and it was from this source that Flood first learnt the intentions of the ministers. He refused to accept the position, and the Lord Lieutenant spoke with very justifiable irritation of the great injury that was done to the public service by the premature disclosure.[2] Portland regarded Flood with much dislike. 'His ambition,' he said, 'is so immeasurable that no dependence can be placed upon any engagement he may be induced to form.'[3]

The question of the sufficiency of the measures that had been taken for securing the constitutional independence of the Irish Parliament, had been raised in a discussion on the clause of the Address, which stated that 'there will no longer exist any constitutional question between the two nations that can disturb their mutual tranquillity.' Flood described this clause as superfluous and possibly dangerous, but he refused to divide against it, and the only two members who voted for its omission were Sir Samuel Bradstreet the Recorder of Dublin, and an able lawyer named Walshe, who first raised in Ireland the question of the adequacy of what was termed 'simple repeal.' The nature of this question may be stated in a few words. The Irish Parliament in 1782 had asserted its own independence of the British Legislature, and the British Parliament had responded

[1] May 3, 1782. Shelburne to Portland.
[2] June 8, 1782. Portland to Shelburne.
[3] August 9, 1782. Portland to Townshend.

by repealing the Declaratory Act of George I., which asserted the legislative and judicial power of Great Britain over Ireland. It was contended by the two lawyers I have mentioned, that as a matter of law this measure was insufficient to annul the assumed right of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland. The Declaratory Act had not made the right, and therefore its repeal could not destroy it. Long before that Act had passed, the right of the English Parliament to legislate for Ireland had been asserted by Coke and other great authorities—had been frequently exercised and had been frequently acquiesced in. If it existed then, it existed still, and although as a matter of expediency the English Parliament had withdrawn its assertion, it was open to it at any time to renew it. No lawyer, it was said, would assert that the assumed right of Great Britain to legislate for Ireland could be taken away by implication. 'The repeal of a declaratory statute is not in construction of law a repeal or renunciation of the principle upon which that statute was founded.' It leaves the legal right exactly as it was before the Declaratory Act had passed. Nothing but an Act of the British Parliament expressly relinquishing or disclaiming the right to legislate for Ireland could be legally sufficient. Ireland must not rest content with 'a constructive freedom.' She must obtain such an explicit renunciation from Great Britain as would put an end to all further controversy and cavil, and become a perpetual charter of her freedom. The language of Fox in moving the repeal of the Act of George I. seemed to draw some distinction between external and internal legislation, and to foreshadow an attempt to retain some part of the former.

These arguments were at first treated in the Irish Parliament with much contempt, and were regarded merely as the quibbles of lawyers, and, although Flood

soon after adopted them and brought them forward on several occasions, he found the great majority against him. Grattan, especially, contended that nothing could be more impolitic, nothing more ungrateful, nothing more dangerous, than to reopen a question which Parliament had solemnly pronounced to be closed. The dealings of nations, he said, must rest upon broad principles of equity and not upon mere legal special pleading, and it was plain that England in repealing the Declaratory Act had taken a step which was morally equivalent to a renunciation. She had in the first place formally asserted her right to legislate for Ireland. She had then, in consequence of an address of the Irish House of Commons denying that right, and with the avowed object of meeting the wishes of the Irish people, as formally retracted and expunged her assertion, and she had thus in effect disavowed or resigned the right. No reasonable man could doubt that this was the plain meaning of the transaction, nor could England revive her claim without the grossest perfidy. But if the supposition of perfidy were admitted, an Act of renunciation would be as useless as simple repeal. Nations cannot be bound like individuals by bonds or warrants. Parliament might renounce its own renunciation, and what one Parliament had enacted, another might repeal. Good faith alone could maintain the connection, and the good faith of England was already pledged to Irish independence. Ireland, it was said, might justly demand the withdrawal of a claim which was an act of usurpation, but with what consistency could she call upon England to renounce rights which she denied that England had ever possessed, or, while assuming to be an independent nation, seek the charter for her freedom in a foreign statute book? The Irish Parliament had stated its grievances, had received redress, had acknowledged itself satisfied. A new demand could only be

regarded as an unworthy attempt to humiliate England. Its only effect would be to shake the confidence of the people in their Constitution; to prolong a period of very dangerous agitation; to foster animosity and distrust between the two countries at a time when it was vitally important to Ireland and to the Empire that all such feelings should be speedily allayed.

These views predominated in the Irish Parliament, and they would no doubt have predominated in the country had not a series of very unfortunate incidents, originating in England, inflamed the jealousy of the nation. Lord Beauchamp, the son of Lord Hertford, strenuously maintained both in the British Parliament and in a pamphlet which was widely read, that simple repeal was entirely insufficient, unless it was accompanied by a formal renunciation.[1] Lord Abingdon—a not very conspicuous member of the English House of Lords—moved for leave to bring in a Bill declaring the right of the Parliament of Great Britain to regulate and control the whole external commerce and foreign trade of Ireland, and repealing any legislation that withdrew any portion of the commerce of Ireland from its control. The Bill was never, it is true, formally introduced, but its mere announcement was quite sufficient to excite consternation in Ireland.[2] Then came the news that two trade laws had passed in England which were drawn up—it is said through the inadvertence of clerks—in such a way as to include Ireland,[3] and about the same time Lord Mansfield decided an Irish law case, which had come up on appeal to the Court of King's Bench before the late Act had passed.

All these things occurred within a few months of the establishment of the Constitution of Ireland,

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 30, 31. See, too, Lord Beauchamp's *Letter to the 1st Belfast Company of Volunteers.* Flood's *Life*, pp. 165-167. Townshend to Temple, Oct. 26, Nov. 4, 1782.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 147-152.

[3] Ibid. 335, 336.

and at the very time when a great reaction of feeling was most to be apprehended. It was known that the Constitution of 1782 had been reluctantly conceded, that it had been conceded mainly in consequence of the desperate condition of public affairs, that it was detested by the Tory party on grounds of prerogative and by a large section of the Whig party as putting an end to the system of commercial monopoly. Lord Rockingham, whose character was universally respected, had just died. The dispute for his succession had thrown English politics into great confusion and uncertainty, and brought other men to the helm, and Portland was now replaced by Lord Temple as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. It was widely believed that there was a disposition on the part of men in authority to undo in time of peace what had been granted in time of war, and a revulsion of feeling speedily set in. The judges, indeed, in Ireland, and several of the leading lawyers, asserted the sufficiency of what had been done, but the lawyers' corps of volunteers, which comprised a very large part of the legal profession, drew up a declaration that in their opinion no real security had been obtained, until the British Legislature had in express terms acknowledged its incapacity to legislate for Ireland. The popularity of Grattan suddenly sank, and that of Flood rose with a corresponding rapidity. It was said that the nation was deceived, that nothing had been really gained, that England was already showing a manifest disposition to withdraw what she had granted.

These suspicions were not unnatural, but they were certainly essentially unfounded. The conduct of Lord Mansfield, though much contested, was thought by the best lawyers to be in accordance with law, as the case which he decided had been entered in his court before the jurisdiction of that court was removed. Lord

Beauchamp spoke solely in the interests of Ireland; Lord Abingdon had no connection with the Government, and the two English Bills in which Ireland was involved appear to have been only another instance of the gross carelessness of the official draughtsmen. It is, however, perfectly true that the English Ministers had from the first disliked the new Irish Constitution, and aimed at an ideal which was wholly different. To any statesman, indeed, who looked on the question with real prescience and without illusion, it must have been evident that the complete independence of the Irish Parliament as it was established in 1782, if it remained unqualified by any further arrangement, must weaken and might endanger the Empire. It was true, indeed, that at this time the one essential condition of co-operation subsisted. There could be no reasonable doubt that the Irish Parliament, and the classes it represented, were unfeignedly and heartily loyal to the British connection. But was it quite certain that this state of things would always continue? Strange as it may now appear, the danger of a rebellious Catholic interest appears at this time to have been little felt. The general conservatism of Catholicism throughout the Continent; the total abstinence of the priesthood from Irish politics; the sincere and undoubted loyalty of the Catholic gentry; the passive attitude of the Catholic population during all the political troubles of the eighteenth century; the authority which the landlords exercised over their tenants; the complete concentration in Protestant hands of the elements of political power, and the enormous superiority of the Protestants in energy and intelligence, made danger from this quarter appear very remote. But among the Presbyterians of the North, and in the ranks of the volunteers, there were some disquieting signs of a republican and anti-English spirit, and if, by any

change in its Constitution, these elements became ascendent, or even powerful, in the Irish Parliament, there was everything to be feared. A separate Irish Parliament consisting of men who were disloyal to the English Government could only lead either to complete separation or to civil war. It would be the most powerful and the most certain agent that the wit of man could devise for organising the resources of Ireland against England.

This contingency might appear a distant one, but even without any serious or reasoned disloyalty, there were in the Constitution of 1782 grave possibilities of conflict, and they were fully present to the minds of the English statesmen who originally consented to it. Fox declared, in the most emphatic language, that 'the intentions of those ministers who had sent the repeal of the declaratory law [to Ireland] were thereby to make a complete, absolute, and perpetual surrender of the British legislative and judicial supremacy over Ireland,'[1] but he afterwards acknowledged that it was only with extreme reluctance, and in consequence of what he regarded as irresistible necessity, that he consented to the surrender of the right of external or commercial legislation, which left the Empire without one general superintending authority to embrace and comprehend the whole system of its navigation.[2] The surrender had been made, but he desired that the two nations should enter into a treaty arrangement, which would draw them more closely together, and one of the resolutions of the English Parliament, which has been already quoted, pointed to such a treaty.[3] 'As there can no longer exist any grounds of contest or jealousy on matters of right between the two countries,' wrote

[1] *Parl. Hist.* xxiii. 323.
[2] Ibid. xxv. 966. This statement was made in 1785.
[3] See pp. 305-308.

Rockingham to Portland, 'the only object of both will be how finally to arrange, settle, and adjust all matters whereby the union of power and strength and mutual and reciprocal advantage may be best permanently fixed.'[1]

Portland, however, was aiming at something more than this; and his secret correspondence shows that he was extremely anxious to regain for England a very large part of the legislative supremacy which had been surrendered. I have already referred to the letter in the beginning of May, in which he expressed his sanguine hope that the Irish Parliament would be prepared to enter into a treaty, either with Commissioners from the English Parliament, or through the medium of the Lord Lieutenant, 'to settle the precise limits of that independence which is required, the consideration that should be given for the protection expected, and the share it would be proper for them to contribute towards the general support of the Empire.' 'The regulation of their trade,' he added, 'is a subject which, I think, would very properly make a part of the treaty,' and he concluded that without such an adjustment the country would not be worth possessing, and that it might even be advisable to abandon it altogether.[2]

It soon, however, appeared evident that the Irish leaders, though they were quite ready to vote additional sailors and soldiers for Imperial purposes, were not prepared at this time to enter into any treaty which would restrict their future liberty of action. In June, Fitzpatrick, the Chief Secretary, was authorised, in the Irish Parliament, publicly to disavow any intention of bringing forward further measures grounded on the second re-

[1] May 25, 1782. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 289.

[2] May 6, 1782. Portland to Shelburne. (Printed in Grattan's *Life*, ii. 286–288.)

solution of the British Parliament.[1] But within three days of this disavowal, certain hopes which had been held out by an Irish member named Ogilvie, had drawn Portland into a new negotiation. Without the knowledge of his Chief Secretary, and with the most urgent injunctions of secrecy, he wrote to Shelburne, expressing his hope that the Irish Parliament might be induced to pass an Act 'by which the superintending power and supremacy of Great Britain in all matters of State, and general commerce, will be virtually and effectually acknowledged, that a share of the expense in carrying on a defensive or offensive war, either in support of our dominions or those of our allies, shall be borne by Ireland in proportion to the actual state of her abilities, and that she will adopt every such regulation as may be judged necessary by Great Britain for the better ordering and securing her trade and commerce with foreign nations, or her own colonies or dependencies.'[2] Shelburne received the intimation with delight. 'Let the two kingdoms,' he wrote, 'be one; which can only be by Ireland now acknowledging the superintending power and supremacy to be where Nature has placed it, in precise and unambiguous terms.'[3] In a few days, Portland wrote with great mortification, that he found it would be impossible at this time to induce Parliament to adopt any such scheme, but it is probable that the rumour of his negotiations spread abroad, and contributed something under the new viceroyalty to the prevailing uneasiness.

Lord Temple had arrived in Dublin on September

[1] See his letter to Grattan, Grattan's *Life*, ii. 297.

[2] Portland to Shelburne, June 6, 1782. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 291, 292. This correspondence was first disclosed by Pitt, in the Union Debate in 1799. Portland expressed his firm persuasion that Grattan would support the Bill, but he had evidently no communication with Grattan on the subject.

[3] Shelburne to Portland, June 9, 1782.

15, and his first impression was, that the task he had undertaken was almost desperate. In some very confidential letters to Shelburne, he depicted the state of the country in the blackest colours. 'No Government,' he says, 'exists.' 'Those to whom the people look up with confidence are not the Parliament, but a body of armed men composed chiefly of the middling and lower orders, influenced by no one, but leading those who affect to guide them.' 'There is hardly a magistrate who will enforce, or a man who will obey, any law to which he objects.' Every day, he said, confirmed his opinion of the necessity of maintaining the strongest opposition to Flood, and to the majority of the volunteers. For this purpose he had made immediate overtures to Charlemont, but he wrote to Shelburne 'in the strictest confidence,' and with a desire that it should be communicated to no one but the King, that he had no real wish to add weight to Lord Charlemont's party. His object was to prevent that party from flying off in support of Mr. Flood's doctrines which were daily growing more popular, and also 'to foment that spirit of disunion among the volunteers, upon which alone,' he said, 'I found my hopes of forming a Government.' The middle and lower classes of volunteers were fast ranging themselves under the banner of Flood, but Flood was universally disliked by the nobility and persons of property, and he must be resisted or possibly bought. 'It is my unalterable opinion,' wrote the Lord Lieutenant, 'that the concession is but the beginning of a scene which will close for ever the account between the two kingdoms.' 'Much time is necessary to recover to the Crown that energy which alone can check a ferment that confines itself to no settled objects, but pervades every part of Ireland.' The one chance of securing the authority of the Government, lay in the Irish Parliament. 'The country is too wild to act from reflection, and till you can oppose

Parliament effectually to the volunteers, nothing can be done.' Grattan was decided to stand his ground, and confident of success if the Government would support him. 'Nothing but a Parliament,' repeated Temple. 'can recover the Government, and be opposed to the volunteers,' and he urged the Government to hasten the elections and summon speedily a new Parliament.[1]

The picture must be judged with some allowance for the colouring of a mind which was always peculiarly prone to exaggerate difficulty and opposition. In one respect Temple speedily changed his policy. 'No terms of reprobation,' he wrote in October, could be too strong to apply to the 'execrable and iniquitous publication of Lord Beauchamp,' but when in the following month the decision of Lord Mansfield was announced, it appeared to him that both in policy and honour a new course was required.[2]

'The claim,' he then wrote, 'so solemnly made, was as solemnly yielded by England, and the repeal of the 6 George I. was understood by England and accepted by the Parliament of Ireland in their addresses to his Majesty, as a full and final renunciation of all claims of jurisdiction and of legislation internal and external. And to this compact the Duke of Portland was enabled to pledge his personal faith, and as far as my testimony could add to it, I conceived myself, on my arrival here, authorised to pledge the faith of the King's servants of England, and my own, that these concessions should be maintained inviolate. It is now certain, that notwithstanding this compact . . . Lord Mansfield has conceived himself authorised to entertain and decide a

[1] Temple to Shelburne, Sept. 30, Oct. 9, 28, Dec. 2, 6, 1782. These letters are not in the regular Government correspondence in the Record Office. I know them through the abstracts in the Lansdowne Papers. British Museum, Add. MSS. 24 131.

[2] Temple to Shelburne, Oct. 28, Dec. 2 and 6, 1782.

cause which had been removed into his court prior to the passing of the Act.' Such a measure might be legal, but it was a distinct breach of the compact by which the right to bind and to judge Ireland only by her own laws and by her own courts was clearly yielded.[1]

There were those in Ireland who maintained with Flood that an Act of renunciation was imperatively necessary to the security of the Constitution. There were those who, with Grattan, considered that such an Act was wrong in principle, and should not be conceded, and there were those who with Charlemont and Chief Baron Burgh considered that, though legally and constitutionally superfluous, it had become politically necessary, as the only means of allaying discontent. To this opinion Temple had now come. It would have been better in his opinion, 'in the interest of the whole Empire, that external legislation (that is, the right of directing the commerce of Ireland) had been reserved by England.' But it had not been reserved, and it remained only to fulfil religiously, the terms of the compact. He had been authorised to pledge the faith of Government, and his own, 'that no attempt should be made to tread back one iota of concessions already made, or to break the good faith so solemnly pledged;' and when 'the question of the sufficiency of simple repeal was agitated from one end of the island to the other,' he had declared in the strongest terms, and with the full approbation of the Government in England, that 'simple repeal comprised complete renunciation.' But the judgment of Lord Mansfield had baffled his policy. 'I owe it to the King's service,' he said, 'to be understood clearly that there is not a man in Ireland (even of those who most firmly supported Lord Carlisle), who will maintain opinions favourable to this measure or even palliating it,

[1] (Most secret and confidential) Temple to Townshend, Nov. 30, 1782.

and that the only reason for the appearance of a calm is that all Ireland is persuaded that England will explain this breach of compact. . . . If the rights specifically acknowledged by England should now be controverted (and I must contend from the clear and unequivocal words of the Irish address, that the right to bind and to judge Ireland only by her own laws and by her own courts was clearly yielded), I cannot hesitate to say that the public faith of the nation, and the private honour of individuals, are committed. Conceiving that this cannot be the intention of the Cabinet, I am only alarmed at the delay.' Two Irish causes are now before the English House of Lords. If it should decide them, 'I will not answer for the effect of such a judgment twenty-four hours after it is known.' Ministers should consider 'the danger to which the public tranquillity of Ireland is exposed, for want of a clear and satisfactory avowal of those principles upon which the Parliament of England proceeded in the month of June last, when they admitted the Irish addresses as the basis of their proceedings.' 'This crisis,' he added, 'will be decisive upon the practicability of governing Ireland by English connection and influence, for, as to an attempt by force (even if a foreign peace would permit it), I trust that the consideration is too wild to have occurred to any man.'[1]

The Government and Parliament of England acted frankly upon this advice, and, for the second time, they consented fully to meet the wishes of the Irish people. In the beginning of 1783, a renunciation Bill was carried without difficulty through the British Parliament,[2] which completely set at rest every reasonable or plausible demand of the party of Flood. It declared that the 'right claim by the people of Ireland, to be bound

[1] (Most secret) Temple to Townshend, Dec. 12, 14, 1782.
[2] 23 George III. c. 28.

only by laws enacted by his Majesty and the Parliament of that kingdom in all cases whatever, and to have all actions, and suits at law or in equity, which may be instituted in the kingdom, decided by his Majesty's courts, therein finally, and without appeal from thence, shall be, and it is hereby declared to be established, and ascertained for ever, and shall at no time hereafter be questioned or questionable,' and that no writ of error or appeal from Ireland shall under any circumstances be again decided in England. No surrender or disclaimer could be more explicit or more honourable, and it must be remembered that it was not made by England at a time of great national danger, but at the very moment when the re-establishment of peace had restored her power. When Temple communicated the news to the King's servants in Ireland, the impression it made was very deep. 'I found in everyone,' he wrote, 'the strongest impressions of the national good faith with which Great Britain has acted, at a moment when her external situation might possibly have given another turn to her councils.'[1]

The Renunciation Act forms the coping-stone of the Constitution of 1782, and before we proceed with our narrative it may be advisable to pause for a moment in order to form a clear conception of the nature of that Constitution—its merits, its defects, and its dangers. Much had indeed been gained—the independence of the judges, the control of the army, the appellate jurisdiction of the Irish House of Lords, the extinction of the power of the Privy Council to originate, suppress, or alter Irish legislation, the renunciation of the power of the British Parliament to legislate for Ireland, the full and repeated acknowledgment of the doctrine that the King, Lords and Commons of Ireland had alone the

[1] Temple to Townshend, Feb. 12, 1783.

right to make her laws. An Irish Act of Henry VIII. and the Irish Act of recognition of William and Mary, had established that the crowns of England and Ireland were inseparable, so that whoever was King of England was *ipso facto* King of Ireland; but the two Legislatures were now regarded as independent, co-ordinate, and in their respective spheres co-equal.

It is sufficiently plain, however, that this was not, and could not be, the case. English Ministers were necessarily dependent on the support of the British Parliament and of that Parliament alone, and even apart from corrupt agencies, English Ministers exercised an enormous influence on Irish legislation. The King's veto was obsolete in England, but it was not likely to be obsolete in Ireland, and it could only be exercised on the advice of his ministers in England. The British Parliament claimed and enjoyed a right of watching over and controlling the conduct of the Executive Government, even in the exercise of what are justly considered undoubted prerogatives of the Crown, and this right, or at least this power, was wholly, or almost wholly, wanting in Ireland. Even the English Privy Council, though it had lost all recognised and formal control over Irish legislation, still retained a not inconsiderable influence. When Bills were sent over from Ireland to receive the royal sanction, it was the custom to submit them in the first place to a committee of the Privy Council, who were instructed to examine them and report on them to the King's law officers in England. This wheel of the machine of administration, indeed, was not public, and it appears to have escaped the notice of historians, but there is reason to believe that it was not inoperative. Occasionally mistakes were detected by the Committee of the Privy Council in Bills which came over from Ireland, and the Secretary of State then directed the Lord Lieutenant to introduce

into the Irish Parliament supplemental Bills for the purpose of correcting them, and sometimes, where this was not possible, Irish Bills were not returned.[1]

Much more important was the fact that there was, properly speaking, no ministry in Ireland responsible to the Irish Parliament. The position of Irish Ministers was essentially different from the position of their colleagues in England. Ministerial power was mainly in the hands of the Lord Lieutenant and of his Chief Secretary, and this latter functionary led the House of Commons, introduced for the most part Government business, and filled in Ireland a position at least as important as that of a Prime Minister in England. But the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary were not politicians who had risen to prominence and leadership in the Irish Parliament. They were Englishmen, strangers to Ireland, appointed and instructed by English Ministers, and changed with each succeeding Administration. The Irish Government was thus completely subordinated to the play of party government in England. An Irish Administration which commanded the full confidence of the Irish Parliament might at any moment be overthrown by a vote in the English Parliament on some purely English question.

This appears to me to have been a fatal fault in the Constitution of 1782. It explains why the duty of 'supporting English Government,' as distinguished from party allegiance, was represented by very honest politicians, as a maxim essential to the safe working of the Irish Constitution. The form of Government was

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[1] Several examples of this kind, taken from the books of the Privy Council, will be found in a valuable article in the *Edinburgh Review*, April 1886, pp. 579, 580. The mistakes appear to have principally occurred in regulating the commercial intercourse, on the basis of reciprocity. The duties or bounties were sometimes incorrectly calculated.

wholly different from that which now exists in the free colonies of England. In those colonies the English governor holds an essentially neutral position. He is appointed for a term of years irrespective of party changes, and although on a very few points affecting the Empire at large, he receives instructions from England, he is not the real source or originator of colonial legislation. The local Parliament divides itself into two great sections representing colonial opinions. Colonial parties are entirely distinct from English ones. The leaders of the dominant section become naturally the ministers; and when one side of the House is discredited, power is at once and without difficulty transferred to the other. If the local Parliament desired to sever the connection with the mother country, it would be a most formidable instrument in doing so; but as long as it has no such wish, it is found by experience that under this system, great convulsions of opinion and changes of power may take place, either in England or the colonies, without in the smallest degree straining the connection, or affecting the position of the representative of the Crown. Colonial and English policy move on different planes, and except on very rare occasions there can be no friction or collision. But such a form of government as existed in Ireland must necessarily have led to the gravest contest, if the Irish Parliament became a really representative body, fluctuating with the fluctuations of Irish opinion, and at the same time moving on English party lines. It would be absurd to suppose that the balance of parties in the two Legislatures could be always the same, and would always vibrate in harmony, and it was not only possible, but in the highest degree probable, that the time would come when the full tide of party feeling would be running in one direction in England, and in the opposite in Ireland. Could a Constitution then subsist under

which an English Cabinet appointed and directed the administration of Ireland?

Under any circumstances the difficulty of keeping the Irish Parliament free from the contagion of English party spirit must have been considerable. Ireland was too near England, and too variously and closely connected with her, not to feel her dominant impulses. Some seats in the Irish House of Commons were at the disposal of great English noblemen who were conspicuous in English politics. Flood, Conolly, and several of the Chief Secretaries held seats at the same time in the Parliaments both of England and Ireland, and close ties of friendship, relationship, and common education connected many of the leading personages in the two countries. Every cause that acted powerfully on English opinion was followed eagerly in Ireland, and some of the questions that were most vitally important to Ireland were party questions in England. Irish viceroys continually represented to the English Government the danger of introducing in England measures for parliamentary reform, or for the relief of the Catholics, on account of the influence they were certain to have in Ireland. But that part of the Constitution which made the Executive in Ireland mainly dependent on English party changes, made it impossible to keep Ireland permanently external to English party divisions, and in a reformed Parliament it could not, as it seems to me, have long continued.

I have already quoted the Duke of Portland's lament, in 1782, that he found the Whigs were not looked on in Ireland as in any way superior to the Tories; and that the general maxim of supporting the King's Government had taken the place of party allegiance.[1] In 1784, the Duke of Rutland, who had just become Lord Lieutenant, in a confidential letter to Lord Sydney

[1] See p. 303.

adopted the opposite view, and dwelt on it with great emphasis. He mentioned that the addresses to him on assuming the government of Ireland were carried through both Houses with the single dissent of the Duke of Leinster, who had privately informed him that he must oppose the Administration. This, Rutland said, showed an evident intention to make the present state of English politics a ground for opposition in Ireland, and he adds that, in agreement with most of the leading people in Ireland, he was very anxious 'to separate and keep away every mixture of English politics and party division from the conduct of affairs.' It would be, he said, 'a most serious misfortune to Ireland, and a great risk to her tranquillity and good order, if she had any implication in the consequences of those divisions and animosities which unhappily prevail in Great Britain.' It is impossible to draw off the attention of many considerable persons in Ireland from English politics. They do 'very materially influence their conduct as to the degree of support and assistance they will engage to give.' Security must be given, 'on very high terms indeed, that particular persons shall be benefited, without being liable to disappointment in case of new changes in administration. I have not a doubt but that the principle of supporting English government prevails over any other, where no bias of interest is thrown on either side, and the good disposition towards his Majesty's service is very generally, and I believe sincerely, professed.'[1]

It must be added that the English doctrine that a parliamentary censure carried against a ministry, or the defeat of an important ministerial measure, must be followed by a resignation, was not recognised in Ireland. Of this fact we shall have more than one illustration in

[1] Rutland to Sydney (confidential), Feb. 27, 1784.

the following pages. The inferiority, however, of the Irish House of Commons in this respect, appears to me to have been a good deal exaggerated; for it is, I think, plain that a parliament, in which the ministers were in a permanent minority, possessed ample power of driving them from office. If an English ministry, which has lost the confidence or incurred the condemnation of the House of Commons, now retires from office, this is not because there is any law compelling it to do so, but simply because the House of Commons exercises such a commanding power in the State that it would be impossible to govern without its concurrence. The Irish Parliament also, under the Constitution of 1782, possessed a great reserve of coercive power. Without the annual Mutiny Act the army could not be supported. Without the additional duties which were voted, at first biennially and afterwards annually, the public service could not be carried on. The magnitude of the hereditary revenue, and the absence of an appropriation Act, placed a much larger proportion of the revenues in Ireland out of the control of the Parliament than in England, and gave great facilities for corruption; but the hereditary revenue consisted mainly of duties voted in perpetuity, which could never be efficiently collected without the assistance of Parliament.[1]

These remarks will, I think, be sufficient to show how impossible it would have been to preserve the Constitution of 1782 unchanged, if the Irish Parliament was so constituted that the balance of political power fluctuated as frequently and decisively as in England. There were also certain other points on which there was much need of supplemental legislation, and which presented grave possibilities of difficulty and danger. If the Irish endeavoured to foster their in-

[1] See on this subject a forcible statement in Grattan's *Speeches*, i. 244, 245.

dustries by protective or prohibitory duties on English goods, they would be acting in perfect accordance with the economical notions prevailing in every leading country in Europe, and especially with the precedents of English policy. There was no treaty arrangement between the two countries which prevented such a course, but it was a course which might prove both economically and politically dangerous to England. Economically, it would close against English trade a market which, in the eighteenth century, had a great importance, and which commercial jealousy considerably overrated. Politically, it might loosen the connection between the two countries, produce feelings of alienation, if not of positive hostility, and greatly strengthen the connection between Ireland and France. It was quite possible that some foreign country might become more closely connected with Ireland than England. At the same time there was no provision whatever for the formation of an Irish navy, or for any participation of Ireland in the expense of the British navy, which protected Irish commerce. It was noticed in 1783 that the whole navy of Ireland consisted of but six revenue cruisers.[1]

In foreign policy the position of Ireland was necessarily completely subordinate. The whole subject of peace and war, alliances and confederacies, lay beyond her domain. Whenever the King of England made peace or war, Ireland was involved in his act. A declaration of war in London at once exposed her coast to invasion. A treaty of peace at once rendered it secure and bound Ireland by its terms. It was no doubt technically true that peace or war lay within the prerogative of the Crown, but the Sovereign in these as in all other matters could only act by the advice of his English Ministers, and could only select as ministers

[1] *Irish Parliamentary Debates*, ii. 75.

those statesmen who were supported by a majority in the British Parliament and who were prepared to carry its policy into effect. It was probable that the declaration of war would be the issue of a long train of foreign policy, repeatedly discussed and modified by the British Parliament, but the Irish Parliament would have no voice in directing its course. It was probable that the war would arise from some question with which Ireland was totally unconcerned, perhaps some commercial question relating to parts of the world from which Irish commerce was excluded. Situated indeed as Ireland was, it was scarcely possible that she should have any enemies except those who were made so by British policy, yet she was perpetually liable to be involved in British wars.

She had, however, one power which might be very efficient, but also very dangerous, to the Empire. The actual participation of Ireland in the common cause could only be effected and sustained by the independent action of the Irish Parliament. If that Parliament, disapproving of the policy which led to the war, desiring to make its power felt in the only possible way in foreign politics, disliking the ministry which made the war, or convinced that Ireland had no interest in its issue, thought fit to withhold its assistance, the Empire might in the most critical periods be deprived of a great portion of its strength, and Ireland by a tacit arrangement with the enemy might be at peace while England was at war. From a military point of view the importance of Ireland to England was very great. Her geographical position and her excellent harbours would make her invaluable to an enemy. In times of peace she maintained an army of 15,000 men, while Great Britain usually maintained only 17,000 or 18,000, and in every war she had contributed largely to the armies in the field.[1] But

[1] I have already abundantly illustrated this fact; but the following passage, from a speech of Burke in 1785, may not be with-

under the Constitution of 1782 this assistance was purely optional, depending on the precarious and transient humours of a popular assembly. If the Irish Parliament at any time thought fit to reduce its army as excessive, it had full power to do so, and in time of war the danger that might result from the conflicting action of two independent Parliaments could hardly be overrated. In the great revolutionary war which filled the last years of the century, the English Parliament exhibited the spectacle of a minority which was fiercely opposed to the war and which did everything in its power to embarrass the ministry that conducted it. Such a minority had a considerable and very injurious moral influence on the struggle, but being a minority it was not able to carry its designs into effect. But if the majority in the Irish Parliament had shared the sentiments of the minority in England, we should probably have seen Ireland neutralising her ports, withdrawing her troops, forbidding recruiting, passing votes of censure on the war, and addressing the King in favour of peace. Could it be questioned that under such circumstances the very existence of the Empire might have been endangered?

I hasten to add that these things never occurred.

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out interest to the reader. 'He was sorry to say that she [Ireland] at present, in time of profound peace, was running in debt, her expenses greatly exceeding her income; but he remembered that in 1753 she had been able to pay off a considerable debt, and had besides a surplus of 260,000*l.* in her treasury. But what was truly astonishing, and he had been a witness of it himself, so soon after as 1761 she was enabled by her prudent system of economy to keep an army of 24,000 in pay, of which 8,000 were sent by her to fight the battles of Great Britain abroad, while 16,000 remained in the kingdom for home defence. She also sent 33,000 recruits, her own natives at her own expense, to fill up regiments in the British service, and spent above 600,000*l.* in Germany for the support of the war. This was an effort from which England had reaped the greatest advantage.'—*Parl. Hist.* xxv. 651.

Nothing is more conspicuous in the history of the Irish Parliament than the discretion with which it abstained from all discussions on foreign policy, and the loyalty and zeal with which it invariably supported England in time of war. Pitt, in introducing the Union in 1799,[1] dwelt strongly on the dangers I have described, and represented them as leading motives of his policy; but he at the same time acknowledged that the divergences in time of war between the two Parliaments which he so gravely feared, had in fact never occurred, and Foster declared that 'in points of peace and war the Irish Parliament had never even during centuries differed in opinion from the British, though its power to do so had been as free and unlimited before as since the Constitution of 1782.' On no point was the policy of Grattan more strongly marked and more consistent than in the earnestness with which he urged that in all questions of peace and war, Ireland must unreservedly follow in the wake of England. But it is the part of a prescient statesman to look forward to distant dangers and to changed dispositions. If the overwhelming power of British Government on the Irish Parliament were withdrawn; if in time of war party passions raged, and factious talent was in the ascendant; if the Parliament of Ireland ceased to be drawn exclusively from classes that were thoroughly loyal to the connection, there were grave dangers to be feared. There is reason to believe that such dangers were already vividly present to the minds of English Ministers; and as early as 1783, the Duke of Richmond had declared in Parliament, that they could only be adequately met by 'an incorporate Union.'[2]

The effect of the simple repeal controversy on Irish

[1] January 23, 1799.

[2] Plowden, *Historical Review of the State of Ireland*, ii. 17.

politics, was very pernicious. It prolonged for several months the period of agitation. It divided the national party in Ireland, and transferred the popular ascendency from Grattan to a man of much more doubtful purity of motive. It, above all, profoundly discredited the Irish Parliament. The English Act of Renunciation was accepted as a proof that the reasoning of Flood was correct, that nothing had before been secured, that the Irish Parliament, in maintaining the adequacy of simple repeal, was betraying the liberties of the country, and that those liberties had once more been saved by the volunteers. To the pressure exerted by that body, it was said, Ireland ultimately owed her free trade, the concessions of 1782, and the final charter of 1783, and had Parliament been her sole representative, no one of these things would have been obtained. Irish freedom was now established as far as words could settle it, but could it be safely entrusted to the guardianship of an assembly, in which twenty or thirty great borough owners could always control a majority? Might not such a parliament, it was asked, be induced to sell to an English minister its independence, or even its separate existence? Flood strenuously maintained that one more great battle must be fought before the Irish Constitution could be secure. The volunteers must induce or coerce Parliament to pass such a reform bill as would make it a true representative of the Protestant section of the nation.

The question was not altogether a new one, nor was it exclusively of home growth. In England, as we have seen, parliamentary reform had acquired a foremost place among political topics, and there was scarcely any other which stirred so strongly the popular sentiment. Chatham had strenuously advocated it, and he had predicted that, 'before the end of the century, either the Parliament will reform itself from within, or

be reformed with a vengeance from without.' The question was brought before the British Parliament with great elaboration by Wilkes in 1776, by the Duke of Richmond in 1780, by the younger Pitt in 1782 and in 1783. Propositions for disfranchising the rotten boroughs, for enfranchising the great manufacturing towns, for adding to the electors and to the members of the counties, for annual parliaments, for universal suffrage, and for equal electoral districts, had been eagerly discussed both in Parliament and beyond its walls. Powerful democratic societies had been formed in the great cities, and they were already in close correspondence with the Irish volunteers, and extremely anxious to induce them to make the attainment of parliamentary reform a capital object of their policy.

It was obvious that a victory in one country would accelerate a victory in the other, and the arguments in favour of reform were much stronger in Ireland than in England. Among the English reformers who corresponded with the Irish volunteers were the Duke of Richmond, Price, Cartwright, and Lord Effingham. In June 1782 Portland, when forwarding to the Government an address from the volunteer delegates of Ulster, thanking the British Parliament for the concessions that had been made, mentions the appearance in their resolutions of 'some new matter respecting the state of the representation in this country, which . . . has been endeavoured of late to be brought into discussion by a very active emissary, who has come from England expressly for that purpose;'[1] but it was not until the simple repeal question was raised, that the subject of reform acquired real importance. In March 1783 a provincial meeting of volunteers at Cork passed resolutions in favour of parliamentary reform, and on July 1

[1] Portland to Shelburne, June 25, 1782.

following, delegates of forty-five companies of Ulster volunteers assembled at Lisburn, resolved to convoke for the ensuing September a great meeting of volunteers at Dungannon, to consider the best way of obtaining a more equal representation in Parliament.

In truth, even putting aside the great anomaly that the Roman Catholics were wholly unrepresented, it was a mockery to describe the Irish House of Commons as mainly a representative body. Of its 300 members, 64 only represented counties, while 100 small boroughs, containing ostensibly only an infinitesimal number of electors, and in reality in the great majority of cases at the absolute disposal of single patrons, returned no less than 200. Borough seats were commonly sold for 2,000*l.* a parliament, and the permanent patronage of a borough for from 8,000*l.* to 10,000*l.* The Lower House was to a great extent a creation of the Upper one. It was at this time computed that 124 members of the House of Commons were absolutely nominated by fifty-three peers, while ninety-one others were chosen by fifty-two commoners.[1]

It needs no comment to show the absurdity and the danger of such a condition of representation. In Ireland, it is true, as in England, borough influence was not always badly used, and the sale of seats, and the system of nomination, neither of which carried with them any real reproach, introduced into Parliament many honourable, able and independent men, who were thoroughly acquainted with the condition of the country. But the state of the Irish representation was much

[1] Gordon's *Hist. of Ireland*, ii. 286. *Letter to Henry Flood on the Representation of Ireland* (Belfast, 1783). See, too, a full report, by the committee appointed by the delegates at Lisburn to collect evidence about parliamentary reform. *Proceedings relating to the Ulster Assembly of Volunteer Delegates* (Belfast, 1783); and also the detailed analysis of the Irish representation in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 472–487.

worse than that of the English, and incomparably more dangerous to the Constitution of the country. England was at least her own mistress. The strongest minister only kept his power by a careful attention to the gusts of popular feeling, and no external power desired to tamper with her Constitution. But the relation of Ireland to England was such that it was quite conceivable that an Irish parliament might act in violent opposition to the wishes of the community which it represented, and quite possible that an English minister might wish it to do so. As long as the volunteers continued, public opinion possessed such a formidable and organised power that it could act forcibly on Parliament. But once that organisation was dissolved, the reign of a corrupt oligarchy must revive. However independent the Irish Parliament might be in the eyes of the law and in the theory of the Constitution, it could not fail to be a dependent and subordinate body holding a precarious existence, as long as a full third of its members were placemen or pensioners, and as long as the English Minister could control the election of the majority of its members. Some borough seats were at the disposal of bishops appointed by Government. Some were in the hands of great English noblemen. It was only necessary to secure a small number of great native borough owners, to obtain a compact majority independent of all fluctuations of popular feeling. The lavish distribution of peerages had proved the cheapest and most efficacious means of governing Parliament, and a pamphleteer in 1783 reminded his countrymen that since 1762 inclusive, the Irish peerage had been enriched or degraded by the addition of thirty-three barons, sixteen viscounts, and twenty-four earls.[1]

During the short Administration of Lord Temple,

[1] Seward's *Rights of the People Asserted* (Dublin, 1783), p. 34.

which lasted only from September 1782 till the following spring, and corresponded with the Shelburne Ministry in England, the Reform agitation scarcely appeared. This Lord Lieutenant was son of George Grenville, and with a double share of the unhappy temper, he inherited much of the industry and something of the financial ability of his father. He succeeded in detecting and punishing several instances of great peculation in administration, and he announced to Lord Charlemont his firm intention of reducing 'that impolitic and unconstitutional influence which has been the bane and ruin of both countries.' During his government the order of the Knights of Saint Patrick was created, and Charlemont was one of its first members, and a scheme was adopted for establishing in Ireland a colony of refugees from Geneva, who desired to expatriate themselves on account of the aristocratic revolution which had just taken place in that city. It was hoped that they might introduce into Ireland some valuable industries and their excellent system of education, and a sum of 50,000*l.* was assigned for establishing the settlement at a place near the confluence of the Barrow and the Suir. A few refugees came over, but the plan ultimately failed on a dispute about terms. It is remarkable as showing how little the Irish Government dreaded the introduction into the country of extreme forms of continental democracy, and if it had succeeded it is probable that it would have brought to Ireland some men who bore a conspicuous part in the French Revolution.[1]

On the resignation of Shelburne, and the triumph of the coalition of Fox and North, Temple at once resigned his post, and Lord Northington was appointed to succeed him. English politics were, however, for

[1] Plowden, ii. 23–27.

some weeks in a state of extreme uncertainty and confusion, and although the resignation of Temple was sent in on March 12, it was not until June 5 that he was allowed to leave Ireland. He complained bitterly of the delay as a personal injury, and added that it was exercising a most dangerous influence in Ireland. 'The very uncertain state of Government in England,' he wrote, 'has operated very strongly upon Irish Government, by unsettling the confidence and opinions which I have so eagerly laboured to impress.' 'The Government of this kingdom suffers by this interregnum to an extent which I cannot describe, and which will materially affect its political situation.'[1]

A dissolution, which immediately followed the arrival of Northington, contributed to maintain the political excitement. It was a significant indication of the relations between the King and his new ministers, that some of the bishops refused to take the ordinary course of placing their borough patronage at the disposal of the Government;[2] and among the lower classes a very bad harvest, followed by great commercial depression, prepared the way for political disaffection. The last letters of Lord Temple and the early letters of Lord Northington were full of complaints of the intensity of the distress. In November 1782, the Irish Parliament had laid an embargo on the export of corn, flour, and potatoes, and about six months later the Lord Lieutenant complained that in all parts of the kingdom the prices were so high that the industrious poor could barely support their families by their labours. In the North, oatmeal, on which the poor chiefly depended for their food, in a short time trebled in price. A proclamation was issued authorising the Custom-

[1] Temple to Townshend, March 12. Temple to North, May 9, 1783.

[2] (Secret and confidential) July 4, 1783, Northington to North.

house officers to accept bonds for the high duties imposed by law on foreign corn imported into Ireland, on the understanding that Parliament as soon as it met would pass an Act to cancel these bonds; a bounty was offered for the importation of wheat, oats, and barley, and in several parts of Ireland tumultuous risings interfered with the removal of food.[1]

Peace had been signed, but there was no prospect of a dissolution of the volunteer body. The last reviews had been the most splendid hitherto celebrated, and the institution had become a great recognised national militia, discharging many important police functions, and bringing the Protestant gentry and yeomanry into constant connection with each other. An attempt of the Administration under the Duke of Portland to draw off a portion of the volunteer force into some newly organised regiments, called Fencibles, proved very unpopular and met with little success. Constant interchanges of civilities between the volunteers and the ordinary troops marked the high position which the force had attained; and when the new Parliament met in October 1783, another vote of thanks to the volunteers for 'their spirited endeavours to provide for the protection of their country, and for their ready and frequent assistance of the civil magistrate in enforcing the due execution of the laws,' was carried through Parliament at the proposal of the Government.[2] The ministers saw that it was inevitable, and therefore did not wish to lose the credit of proposing it; and among those who disliked the continuance of the volunteers, there were several who were prevented from resigning their posts through fear of being replaced by

[1] Temple to North, May 23, 30. Proclamation, June 9. Northington to North, June 10, 26, 1783. *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 346, 347.

[2] Oct. 14, 1783, Northington to North. *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 9.

incendiaries. Grattan and Charlemont had both been made Privy Councillors, but when the volunteers threw themselves into the reform agitation, the relations between the Castle and Charlemont became very cold, and Charlemont was rarely summoned to the meetings of the Council.

Among the measures which were announced in the Speech from the Throne, were the establishment of a separate post office and Court of Admiralty in Ireland, and at this time the system of annual sessions was introduced. Lord North expressed the strong dislike of the Government in England to this innovation, but Northington urged that it was generally expected in Ireland, and that it appeared to the King's servants both useful and inevitable. It would accelerate decisions upon appeals, which were now confined to the Irish House of Lords. It would prevent delay in adopting any new commercial regulations that might be made in the English Parliament, and it was likely to check the growing habit of provincial meetings, which were justified by the long recesses of Parliament. Supplies were accordingly henceforth voted only for a year.[1]

The hostility which the simple repeal question had created between Flood and Grattan became deeper and deeper. The dominant idea of the policy of Grattan at this time was that the public mind should at all hazards be calmed. Ireland, he contended, had passed through a period of violent and convulsive change, and there was great fear lest the fever of political agitation should become inveterate in her system. Nothing could be more fatal to her new-born liberty, than that a body of armed men should constitute themselves permanently into a kind of legislative assembly, should dictate measures to Parliament, should overawe Parliament by

[1] Northington to North, Sept. 23, Oct. 18. North to Northington, Oct. 7 1783

scarcely disguised menaces of force. Next to the liberty of their own country, the first object of all true Irish patriots should be the strength and unity of the Empire, and the extinction of all feelings of disloyalty and animosity towards England. The agitation on the simple repeal question had already done much mischief, and it was evident that a very dangerous spirit of restlessness was abroad. A violent and sometimes a seditious press had arisen, and there were agitators who sought to gain popularity, power, and perhaps reputation, by inflaming the public mind against England and against the Parliament, at a time when a great part of the Protestant population were under arms, and when the recent triumphs in America had stimulated the republican elements that were smouldering in Ulster.

The example of Flood, and the recent resolutions of the volunteers, had greatly intensified the spirit of disquietude. Irish manufacturers, who found themselves in a period of extreme distress, and overpowered by English competition, began to call loudly for protecting duties. An absentee tax was proposed by Molyneux, and discussed at much length, but it ultimately only found twenty-two supporters.[1] Sir Edward Newenham, an ardent partisan of Flood, introduced, without a shadow of reason, a motion for limiting the supplies to six months. The language used on the question of parliamentary reform, by the volunteers, and by their organs in the press, was much less that of a petition than of a command. There were loud and justifiable complaints of the extravagant management of the finances. The revenue, indeed, was said to have increased in two years by more than three hundred thousand pounds, but there was an annual deficit of about two hundred thousand pounds, and Ireland, which had no national debt in 1755, had now a

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 277-289.

debt of nearly two millions.[1] The field for retrenchment in the civil administration was very ample, but Flood insisted that the most important retrenchment should be sought in the military department, that in a country like Ireland a peace establishment of 15,000 men was extravagantly and fatally large, that 12,000 men would be amply sufficient, and that the condition of the finances imperatively demanded the reduction. He brought forward the subject again and again with great pertinacity, and it is probable that one leading object of the proposal was to throw the country still more absolutely into the hands of the volunteers.

There was little danger of Parliament adopting these measures, and Flood was usually supported only by a small minority; but the agitation of such questions greatly increased the disquietude of the public mind. Grattan opposed the proposition for reducing the army with especial vehemence. The magnitude of the Irish army, he said, was Ireland's contribution to the defence of the Empire, and her compensation for the protection she received from the British fleet. The augmentation, under Lord Townshend, was part of a distinct compact which was binding in honour though not in law. It had been made at a time when England possessed America and owed 150 millions less than she owes at present, when Ireland had no trade at all, and when her Constitution was denied. Since then Ireland had regained her Constitution and her commercial liberty; England had conceded to her the vast benefits of the plantation trade, and the Irish Parliament had pledged itself to stand or fall with her. Was this a period in which Ireland, with an augmented revenue, an increased population, and a vastly greater interest

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 34, 79, 81, 103. Grattan estimated the increase of the revenue during the last two years at 100,000*l.* per year (p. 103.)

in the Empire, could honourably withdraw her old support?[1]

The sense of the House was strongly and manifestly on the side of Grattan, and, in the course of the debate, more than one voice urged upon the volunteers the propriety of disbanding. The course adopted by Flood, though it had re-established his popularity with the volunteers, had alienated him from several of his most valuable friends, had produced a strong remonstrance from Charlemont, and had more than once brought him into collision with Grattan. In October 1783, in one of the debates on the proposed reduction of the forces, a violent altercation broke out between Flood and Grattan, and two invectives, both of them disgracefully virulent, and one of them of extraordinary oratorical power, made all cordial co-operation, for the future, extremely difficult. The interposition of the House prevented a duel. Flood afterwards very magnanimously occupied the chair at a volunteer meeting, when a vote of thanks to Grattan was passed, and Grattan long afterwards, in his pamphlet on the Union, and on many occasions in private conversation, bore a high testimony to the greatness of Flood; but the old friendship of the two leaders was at an end, and words had been spoken which could never be forgiven.

The essentially political attitude which the volunteers were now assuming created much alarm. In July 1783, 'a committee of correspondence,' appointed by the delegates assembled at Lisburn for the purpose of arranging the forthcoming meeting at Dungannon, wrote to Charlemont asking his support and advice. They begged him to indicate 'such specific mode of reform' as appeared to him most suitable for the condition of Ireland, and at the same time to inform them,

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* 84, 103, 104.

whether in his opinion the volunteer assembly should bring within the range of their discussions at Dungannon, such subjects as the propriety of shortening the duration of parliaments, exclusion of pensioners, a limitation of the numbers of placemen, and a tax on absentees. Charlemont perceived with much alarm the disposition of the force to attempt to regulate and perhaps control the whole field of legislation, and he urged the committee to confine themselves to the single question of reform, and on this question to content themselves with asserting the necessity of the measure, leaving the mode of carrying it out, exclusively to the mature deliberation of Parliament.[1]

The volunteers could hardly have had a safer counsellor, and Charlemont, though by no means a man of genius, exercised at this time a very great influence in Irish politics. He was now in his fifty-fifth year. He had inherited his title when still a child, and having never gone through the discipline of a public school, had spent more than nine years in travelling on the Continent. For some years he plunged deeply into the dissipations of the lax society in Italy, but he never lost a sense of higher things, and he brought back a great taste and passion for art, a wide range of ornamental scholarship, and a very real earnestness and honesty of character. At Turin he had formed a close intimacy with Hume, but it had not impaired either his religious principles or his strong Whig convictions. In Paris he had discussed Irish politics very fully with Montesquieu, and was struck with the earnestness with which that great philosopher recommended a legislative union with England as the best safeguard of Irish liberty. He afterwards became an intimate friend of Burke, an early member of that brilliant club which Johnson and

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 94–98.

Reynolds had formed, a careful and discriminating student of the debates in the English Parliament, and then an almost constant resident in Ireland and a leading figure in Irish politics. A nervousness which he was never able to overcome, and which was aggravated by much ill health, kept him completely silent in the House of Lords, and in his intimate circle he often showed himself somewhat vain and irresolute and easily offended; but in addition to his great social position, he had personal qualities of a kind which often go further in politics than great brilliancy of intellect, and he was one of the very few prominent Irish politicians who had never stooped to any corrupt traffic with the Government.

Like his contemporary Rockingham he possessed a transparent purity and delicacy of honour, which won the confidence of all with whom he came in contact, a judgment singularly clear, temperate and unbiassed, a natural affability of manner which made him peculiarly fitted to conciliate conflicting interests and characters. He wrote well, though often with a vein of weak sentimentalism which was the prevailing affectation of his time, and he threw himself into many useful national enterprises with great industry, and with invariable singleness of purpose. He was a Whig of Whigs—with all that love of compromise; that cautious though genuine liberality; that combination of aristocratic tastes and popular principles; that dislike to violence, exaggeration, and vulgarity; that profound veneration for the British Constitution, and that firm conviction that every desirable change could be effected within its limits, which characterised the best Whig thought of the time. His property lay in the province which was the centre of the volunteer movement. He was one of the earliest and most active of its organisers, and the unbounded confidence of the more liberal section of the

Irish gentry in his penetration and his judgment, had raised him speedily to its head.

His position was, however, now becoming very difficult. Flood and Grattan, with whom he had hitherto most cordially co-operated, were alienated from each other, and both of them were in some degree alienated from him. Though he ultimately admitted the expediency of passing the Act of Renunciation, and though he cordially maintained the necessity of parliamentary reform, he strongly disapproved of the conduct of Flood in raising the first question, and in bringing the second question under the deliberations of an armed body. Grattan had been first brought into Parliament by Charlemont, and a deep attachment subsisted between them; but a coldness had lately grown up which soon culminated in a breach. Grattan was now wholly alienated from the volunteers; he would evidently have gladly seen their dissolution at the peace, and he cordially supported Lord Northington's Administration. Charlemont, on the other hand, was strongly in favour of the maintenance in arms of the volunteer force. He had more and more gravitated to opposition, and he was in consequence rarely consulted by the Administration with which Grattan was in close alliance. Grattan appears to have done everything in his power to soothe the irritation of his friend, and his letters to him are extremely honourable to the writer; but he had to deal with a somewhat fretful and morbid temperament, and he was not able to succeed. At the same time a new democratic and even seditious spirit was rising among the volunteers, with which Charlemont had no sympathy and which it was very doubtful whether he could control, and a very singular rival had lately arisen in the North, who threatened, for a time, to obtain an ascendency in the volunteer body, and to throw the whole of Ireland into a flame.

Frederick Augustus, Earl of Bristol, and Bishop of Derry, was the third son of that Lord Hervey who was long chiefly remembered as the victim of the most savage of all the satires of Pope, but whose reputation has been greatly raised by the publication of those masterly memoirs in which he had described the Court and politics of George II. His family had been noted for their eccentricity, and a saying attributed to Chesterfield, that God created men, women, and Herveys, has been often repeated.[1] As was frequently the case with the younger sons of great families, he entered the Church without the smallest ecclesiastical leaning; and his eldest brother having been for a few months Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, he obtained the promise of an Irish bishopric. In 1767 during the Viceroyalty of Lord Townshend he was made Bishop of Cloyne. He was translated in the following year to the enormously rich bishopric of Derry, and in 1779 he inherited an English earldom and a great fortune.

Rich, hospitable, lavishly generous, passionately fond of show and popularity, an exquisite judge of art and by no means destitute of general learning and ability, anxious to search out and to encourage intellectual merit wherever he could find it,[2] and quite capable of playing many different parts with spirit and distinction, he soon made himself one of the most popular men in Ulster. No previous bishop in his diocese had done so much to build, restore, or embellish churches, and he also showed himself extremely liberal and energetic in developing the natural resources of the country. A new bridge over the Foyle was largely due to his energy. He undertook extensive operations in searching for coal. He opened out wild and uncivilised

[1] It has also been ascribed to Lord Townshend and to Lady Mary Montague.

[2] See Burdy's *Life of Skelton* (Skelton's *Works*, i. xcvi, xcvii).

districts in his diocese by roads constructed at his own expense. He built two great palaces, collected pictures and statues, exercised a very liberal hospitality, and took especial pains to place himself on the most friendly terms with the Presbyterians. With the Catholics he was equally friendly. We have already caught some glimpses of the part which he took both at Rome and in Ireland in favour of the earlier Toleration Bill; and it was noticed on the monument that was erected to his memory after his death, that the Roman Catholic bishop and the resident Presbyterian minister at Derry were both among the contributors.[1]

His papers have unfortunately perished, and we have no means of ascertaining whether any real change had passed over his character and opinions, which may help to explain the strange want of keeping between the different descriptions or periods of his life. In 1779 Shelburne, who knew Ireland well, spoke in the House of Lords in strong terms of the neglect of duty and the abuse of patronage which were common among the Irish bishops, but he observed that there were a few eminent exceptions—the most remarkable being Primate Robinson and the Bishop of Derry.[2] Charlemont, and Hardy the biographer of Charlemont, though extremely hostile to the Bishop, have both spoken in high terms of the manner in which he distributed his patronage among the oldest and most respectable clergy of his diocese.[3] But the most curious picture of the Bishop, when read in the light of his later career, is that which is furnished by the Journal of Wesley, who, when he came over to

[1] Many particulars relating to the Ulster life of the Bishop will be found in an interesting sketch of his history by the Rev. Classon Porter, a gentleman who has contributed much that is valuable to the local history of Ulster. It is reprinted from the *Northern Whig*.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xx. 1164.

[3] Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography*; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 103.

Ireland on his evangelical mission, found in Lord Bristol a most cordial supporter. 'The Bishop,' writes Wesley, describing a Sunday at Londonderry in 1775, 'preached a judicious, useful sermon on the blasphemy of the Holy Ghost. He is both a good writer and a good speaker, and he celebrated the Lord's Supper with admirable solemnity.' A few days later, 'the Bishop invited me to dinner, and told me, "I know you do not love our hours, and will therefore order dinner to be on table between two and three o'clock." We had a piece of boiled beef and an English pudding. This is true good breeding. The Bishop is entirely easy and unaffected in his whole behaviour, exemplary in all parts of public worship, and plenteous in good works.'[1]

It is curious to compare this picture with the emphatic judgment of Charlemont, who, while admitting the many generous actions of the Bishop, described him as a bad father, a worse husband, a determined deist, very blasphemous in his conversation, and greatly addicted to intrigue and gallantry; with that of Fox, who described him as a madman, and a dishonest one; with that of Barrington, who delineated him at great length as a brilliant but purely secular and most unscrupulous politician. Jeremy Bentham met him at Bowood in 1781, and described him in his diary in a passage which bears a strong impress of truth. 'He is a most excellent companion, pleasant, intelligent, well-bred and liberal-minded to the last degree. He has been everywhere and knows everything.' He told Bentham that the rectors in his diocese enjoyed incomes of from 250*l.* to 1,500*l.* a year, and declared it to be a wonder and a shame that they should be suffered to remain in possession of so much wealth, since scarcely any of them resided, and since they only paid their curates '50*l.*

[1] Wesley's *Journal*, June 1, 6, 1775.

a year, which is their own estimate of what the service done is worth. . . . He assumed to me,' continued Bentham, 'unless I much mistook him, a principal share in the merit of carrying the Toleration Act through the Irish House of Lords. He was, in his own mind at least, for going further and admitting them [the Catholics] to all offices, that of member of Parliament not excepted.' Lord Shelburne, Bentham says, spoke of 'the flightiness of Lord Bristol, who he says is equally known for his spirit of intrigue and his habit of drawing the long bow. Indeed, there does seem to be something of that in him.'[1]

There were reports that Lord Bristol had been refused the bishopric of Durham, and had even aspired to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland; but they seem to be attested by no evidence, and it was probably no deeper reason than an uncontrollable love of excitement and of popularity, that produced the strange spectacle of a man, who was at once a great bishop and an English earl, exerting all his energies to enroll and arm Irish volunteers,[2] and endeavouring to bring them into collision with the Irish Parliament and with England. At the assembly of volunteer delegates, which met at Lisburn in July 1783, a committee was appointed to collect information about the state of representation in Ireland, and to correspond with the different reform associations in England; and the general meeting of delegates of the whole province of Ulster, which was held at Dungannon in the ensuing September, passed resolutions declaring that, a majority of the Irish House of Commons being returned by the mandates of a few peers and commoners, that House was in no sense a representation of the people; that 'the elective franchise

[1] Bentham's *Works*, x. 93, 94, 101.

[2] See the curious letter of the Bishop offering assistance for the purchase of camp equipage. Grattan's *Life*, ii. 262, 263.

ought of right to extend to all those, and those only, who are likely to exercise it for the public good,' and that the present imperfect representation, and long duration of Parliament, were intolerable grievances. They at the same time called upon the few representatives of free constituencies to refuse to vote any but short bills of supply, till their grievances were redressed; expressed the warmest sympathy with the English and Scotch reformers, and summoned the volunteers of all four provinces to meet together, to elect a convention of delegates, chosen by ballot from each county in Ireland. This convention was to meet in Dublin on November 10, shortly after Parliament had assembled and while it was still sitting, to frame a plan of reform, and to demand those rights without which 'the forms of a free nation would be a curse.'

Charlemont and Flood were not present at these proceedings. The first had probably abstained from policy, and the second on account of a passing illness. Colonel Stewart, the member for Tyrone, who was an intimate friend of Charlemont, was in the chair, but the influence of the Bishop appears to have predominated, and he had put himself at the head of the democracy of the North. Being absolutely free from every form of ecclesiastical superstition, and the most emphatic advocate of a wide measure of parliamentary reform, and of the most complete liberality in Church and State, he had become exceedingly popular among the Presbyterians, and in May 1784 a most curious address was presented to him by the Presbytery of Derry, expressing 'their perfect approbation of the liberality of his lordship's religious sentiments.' 'Christianity,' they proceed, 'is liberal, and he is the best disciple of Jesus Christ who possesses the most extensive charity and good-will to the human race. . . . As ministers of the Gospel of Peace . . . they rejoice in this opportunity of

giving their tribute of deserved praise to a character in every respect so dignified.' 'The liberality of sentiment,' answered the Bishop, 'which you ascribe to me, flows from the rare consistency of a Protestant bishop, who feels it his duty, and has therefore made it his practice, to venerate in others that inalienable exercise of private judgment which he and his ancestors claimed for themselves. . . . On the great object which now centres in me the applauses of such various and even contradictory denominations of citizens, I do own to you the very rock which founds my cathedral is less immovable than my purpose to liberate this high-mettled nation from the petulant and rapacious oligarchy which plunder and insult it.'[1]

It was not, however, merely on the Presbyterians that the Bishop relied. One of his leading and most distinctive notions was to bring the Catholic body into active politics, by claiming for them the elective franchise and by inducing them to agitate for it themselves. At the meeting of Dungannon the question was already brought forward, but it was laid aside on account of the strenuous opposition of the friends of Charlemont.[2] From this time, however, it entered into the programme of the more democratic party, and overtures to the Roman Catholics emanating for the most part from Presbyterian sources became frequent.[3]

The proposal to hold a volunteer convention in Dublin excited the keenest alarm. It was, in effect, to set up at the doors of the legal Parliament, and at a time when that Parliament was sitting, a rival representative body emanating from and supported by an armed force, and convened for the express purpose of

[1] Mant's *Church History of Ireland*, ii. 692-694.

[2] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 100.

[3] See an example of this in the *Freeman's Journal*, Nov. 20–22, 1783, which Lord Northington sent to England.

directing or intimidating the Legislature of the nation. Fox wrote with great emphasis, that if such a body were suffered to continue, above all if the smallest concession were made in obedience to its mandates, the freedom of Ireland would be at an end; her boasted Constitution would be replaced by a Government as purely military as that of the Prætorian Guards; demand would follow demand, and complete anarchy would be the inevitable end.[1] At the same time it was almost impossible to prevent the Convention from meeting. The upper classes looked indeed with alarm on the new movement, but the yeomanry of the North were enthusiastic in its favour. Precedents had been established within the last few years, that made it very difficult to condemn it as illegal, and the volunteers had assumed such a position that it was almost impossible to repress them. They were a great and disciplined army comprising all that was best in the Protestant population of Ireland. They had been three times thanked by Parliament. The address of the two Houses of Parliament in 1782 had been carried to the Castle between two lines of volunteers. A succession of Lord Lieutenants had courted and eulogised them at a time when they were actually interfering in politics, and the Renunciation Act which had just been carried in England was mainly attributed to their influence. To prevent them from now meeting in convention would in the opinion of the Lord Lieutenant be dangerous or impossible.

Charlemont was confronted with that question which under different forms and names has constantly pressed upon Irish politicians. All the information from the North showed that it would be perfectly futile to oppose the meeting of the Convention. He had, as we have seen, tried at the outset to limit its functions to that of

[1] Fox to Northington, Nov. 1, 1783. Grattan's *Life*, iii. 106-1783. Fox to Burgoyne, Nov. 7, 116.

petitioning for parliamentary reform; but it was extremely doubtful whether the advice would be taken. The question he had to decide was whether he ought to take part in the Convention or to stand aloof from it. In the one case he would countenance and participate in a proceeding which he regarded as dangerous and unconstitutional. In the other case it was tolerably certain that the whole management of the Convention, it was possible that the whole direction of the volunteer force, would fall into the hands of demagogues of the most dangerous type.

Charlemont determined to accept the first alternative, to propose himself, and to induce others of the leading gentry connected with the movement to propose themselves, as candidates for election in the Convention. He has himself stated his motives with great candour. 'Though I never cordially approved of the meeting, yet, as I found it impossible to withstand the general impulse towards it, . . . I did not choose to exert myself against it, especially as there was cause to fear my exertions would be fruitless, and if so might prevent my being useful towards moderating and guiding those measures which I could not with efficiency oppose, and directing that torrent which might otherwise have swept down all before it. I had upon mature consideration determined that to render the assembly as respectable as possible was the next best mode to the entire prevention of it.'[1]

The efforts of Charlemont were in a great degree successful. The Convention, he says, formed 'a truly respectable body of gentlemen, for though some of the lower classes had been delegated, by far the majority were men of rank and fortune, and many of them members of Parliament, Lords and Commons.' Among

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 106.

the delegates were Charlemont, Flood, and the Bishop of Derry.[1]

The Bishop did everything in his power, to aggravate by his conduct the dissension between the Convention and Parliament. He was now accustomed to go about, escorted by a troop of volunteer light cavalry enrolled and commanded by his nephew, George Robert Fitzgerald, a man who about three years later was hanged for a very aggravated murder, and whose history had been already a strange illustration of the utter lawlessness prevailing in some sections of Irish life. He was the son of a gentleman of considerable fortune in the wildest parts of Mayo. His mother, Lady Mary Hervey, once maid of honour to the Princess Amelia, and sister to three successive Earls of Bristol, had been compelled by the gross ill usage of her husband to seek a separate maintenance, and became in later life a prominent figure in the early Evangelical movement, and an intimate friend of Venn and of Fletcher of Madeley.[2] George Robert, their eldest son, was educated at Eton; he connected himself by marriage with the great families of Leinster and Conolly; travelled on the Continent, was presented at the French Court, wrote both prose and verse with some grace, and concealed under the appearance of a well-bred, polished, and almost effeminate gentleman, a character reckless and savage to the very verge of insanity. He was soon noted as one of the best shots, one of the most desperate duellists, and one of the most arrogant bullies in the West, and a crowd of stories are told of the savage animosity and the brutal insults with which he pursued his enemies, and of the terror which he excited in the wild country in which he lived. Among many other strange freaks, he was accustomed to hunt the fox in the deadest

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 106.
[2] *Life of the Countess of Huntingdon*, ii. 194, 195

hours of the night, to the terror of the superstitious peasantry, who, as the chase swept by and as the red gleam of the torches flashed through the darkness, imagined that hell had broken loose and that demon hunters were infesting the land. In consequence of a fierce family quarrel he seized upon his father and kept him for five months in strict confinement in his house at Rockfield, under the guard of 200 or 300 ruffians who followed his fortunes, and many of whom had escaped from gaol. Cannon were mounted around the house; all communications were cut off; although the younger brother obtained without difficulty a writ, the sheriff did not dare to execute it, and, at last, when the assizes were being held at Castlebar, George Robert Fitzgerald appeared of his own accord in the court house, and calmly took his place among the grand jurors of the county. The audacity of the proceeding, however, proved too great. The younger brother was present, and at his request the judge ordered the arrest of Fitzgerald, who was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment and to a heavy fine. As was generally expected, he did not lie long in prison. Pistols were conveyed to him. He soon in broad daylight escaped, returned to Rockfield, which lay about three miles from Castlebar, and caused the cannon which defended his house to be fired several times in honour of his release. The younger brother urged upon the sheriff the necessity of executing the writ, but was informed that without the assistance of regular troops such an enterprise was hopeless, and Fitzgerald not only remained at large, but exercised a general terrorism over the whole country.

He soon, however, by his own reckless imprudence, fell within the grasp of the law. About three weeks after his escape from Castlebar he ventured to Dublin in the company of his father, and was there, by the in-

strumentality of his brother, and on the information of his father, arrested and committed to prison. He obtained a writ of error, but the King's Bench affirmed his sentence, and he lay in confinement for more than eighteen months, when bad health, and influence in high quarters, procured his release. At the end of March 1783, the Attorney-General recommended him for pardon.[1] He appears to have speedily gone to his uncle at Derry, and to have thrown himself actively into volunteering, and in May 1784, little more than a year after his release from prison, through the influence of the Bishop, he was presented with the freedom of the city of Londonderry.[2]

Accompanied by the troop of dragoons commanded by this singular personage, the Bishop of Derry entered Dublin in November 1783 in royal state. Dressed entirely in purple, with diamond knee and shoe buckles, and with long gold tassels hanging from his white gloves, he sat in an open landau drawn by six noble horses caparisoned with purple ribbons. The dragoons rode on each side of his carriage, which proceeded slowly through the different streets amid the cheers of a large crowd till it arrived at the door of the Parliament House, where a halt was called, and a loud blast of trumpets startled the assembled members. Several wholly ignorant of the cause of the tumult flocked from

[1] See the memorial of Charles Lionel Fitzgerald to the Earl of Carlisle (Sept. 24, 1781), and the letter of G. R. Fitzgerald to the same, Jan. 26, 1781, Irish State Paper Office. Two of Fitzgerald's letters from prison are preserved in the miscellaneous correspondence, Irish State Paper Office; and his very curious memorial to the Government in 1783, and the opinion of the Attorney-General upon it, will be found in the Irish Record Office, Entries of Civil Petitions. See also *The Case of G. R. Fitzgerald, impartially considered, with Anecdotes of his Life* (1786); *A Letter to the Right Hon. W. Eden, by a Member of the Rockfield Legion commanded by G. R. Fitzgerald*; and a curious life of Fitzgerald published in 1786.

[2] Mant's *History of the Irish Church*, ii. 693.

curiosity to the door, and the Bishop saluted them with royal dignity. The volunteers presented arms; the bands played the Volunteer March; and then, with a defiant blast of trumpets, the procession proceeded on its way. The Bishop was highly elated. He imagined that he would be elected president of the Convention, and he appears to have entertained a real design of heading a rebellion. 'We must have blood, my lord, we must have blood!' he once exclaimed to Lord Charlemont.[1]

Fortunately, however, for the peace of the country, the great majority of the Convention, which assembled in Dublin on November 10, were men of a very different stamp from the warlike Bishop. To his great disappointment Charlemont was elected the chairman, and though the Convention contained some demagogues and incendiaries, it consisted chiefly of country gentlemen of character and position, and contained several experienced and constitutional politicians, who had been induced by Charlemont to offer themselves as delegates for the express purpose of moderating its proceedings, and also some warm friends of the Government, who deliberately laboured to perplex its debates by divided counsels and multiplied propositions.[2] The meeting

[1] Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*. Barrington's *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, ccvii. xix. Fitzgibbon, many years later, in reviewing this period of Irish history, while speaking of the extreme danger to Government of such a military Convention as that of 1783, made the following remarkable admission: 'In that Convention I will venture to say there was not a single rebel; there was not a member of it who would not willingly have shed his blood in the defence of his Sovereign and of the Constitution.' — Speech of Earl of Clare, February 19, 1798 (Dublin, 1798), p. 80. I believe this was certainly not true of the Bishop of Derry.

[2] 'The next step was to try by means of our friends in this assembly [the Convention] to perplex its proceedings and to create confusion in their deliberations, in order to bring their meeting into contempt and to create a necessity of its dissolving itself. This method had con-

was first held in the Exchange, but was afterwards adjourned to the Rotunda. Having endeavoured to justify their proceedings by a resolution that, 'the Protestant inhabitants of this country are required by the statute law to carry arms and have the use of them, and are not by their compliance with the law excluded from the exercise of their civil rights,' and having asserted in the strongest terms their attachment to the Sovereign and to the Constitution, they proceeded to the great task of drawing up a scheme of parliamentary reform. On the motion of the Bishop of Derry, a committee consisting of one member from each county was appointed to frame a plan for the approbation of the Convention, but little progress was made till, at the suggestion of the same person, Flood, who was not on the committee, was called in as an assessor. His practised eloquence and great constitutional knowledge soon obtained a complete ascendency. The Bishop more than once endeavoured to bring forward the question of the Catholic franchise, but Flood and Charlemont opposed him, and though he met with considerable support he was defeated.[1] A proposition to recommend vote by

siderable effect. They are strongly embarrassed by a multiplicity of plans, and are much alarmed by the Roman Catholics claiming a right to vote.'—Northington to Fox, Nov. 17, 1783: Grattan's *Life*, iii. 130, 131. In the beginning of 1784 Northington recommended very strongly Ogle, the member for Wexford, for the place of registrar of deeds. He says: 'His private character and public conduct command universal esteem. He has given the most decided and cordial support upon all occasions to my administration. . . . His zeal likewise induced him to attend the Convention, of which he was chosen a member, where he exerted his efforts constantly to check and control the mischievous tendency of measures proposed there, and to support what might be the wishes of the Government.'—Northington to Sydney, Jan. 25, 1784.

[1] 'The Bishop again renewed the Catholic question, in which he was warmly supported by many of the Connaught and by some of the Munster delegates, while even a few of the Northern Dissenters, by their speeches and

ballot was rejected after some debate, and at last, after three weeks of deliberation, a very comprehensive plan of reform drawn up by Flood was agreed upon. Charlemont and the five other borough proprietors who sat in the Convention, declared their readiness to surrender their patronage. At length, on November 29, 1783, the preliminary measures being all accomplished, Flood proposed that he and such other members of Parliament as were present, should at once proceed from the Convention to the Parliament, and move for leave to bring in a Bill of reform corresponding to the plan which had been agreed upon, and that 'the Convention should not adjourn till the fate of the motion was known.'

It would be impossible to assert more strongly the position of the Convention as a kind of rival Legislature, and to bring it more directly into conflict with the Parliament. Charlemont greatly disapproved of the step, and he would gladly have sent down the Volunteer Bill to the different counties to be recommended by public meetings and petitions; but Flood would admit no delay, and his influence, supported by that of the Bishop, swayed the meeting. That night he appeared with several other members of the Convention in the House of Commons, dressed in the uniform of the volunteers, and asked leave to bring in his Reform Bill. In substance, the Volunteer Reform Bill was much less extreme than the schemes of reform which about this time were recommended by the Duke of Richmond and other reformers in England. It proposed to restrict the right of voting, except in the case of electors who possessed freehold or leasehold property of 20*l.* a year, to men who had actually resided in the constituency six

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acquiescence, appeared already to indicate the approach of that strange madness by which they were, not long after, actuated.' —Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography.*

months out of the preceding twelve; to throw open the decayed boroughs by extending their franchise to the neighbouring districts; to annul by Act of Parliament the by-laws by which any corporation had contracted the right of franchise; to give votes to all Protestants resident in any city or borough, who possessed freeholds or leaseholds of a specified value and duration; to incapacitate all who held pensions during pleasure from sitting in Parliament; to compel every member of Parliament accepting a pension for life, or any place under the Crown, to vacate his seat and submit to a new election; to oblige all members to swear that they had not given money for their seats; and finally to limit the duration of Parliament to three years.

The prospects of the Bill, however, were soon seen to be hopeless. It asked at least two-thirds of the members of the House of Commons to make a sacrifice of power, privilege, or money, such as no Legislature or ascendent caste has ever consented to make, except under the pressure of extreme necessity or of extreme enthusiasm, and it asked them to do this at a time when they had every motive to strengthen them in their resistance. A large proportion of the Convention, including its president, were notoriously half-hearted, or hostile to its proceedings. Many of the leading patriots of Ireland, and among them the chief author of the Constitution of 1782, were utterly opposed to the meeting of the Convention. The language and conduct of the Bishop of Derry; the Catholic question suddenly thrown into the arena of Irish politics; the violence of a considerable part of the Press, had disturbed, irritated, and divided the nation. The natural pride of Parliament was aroused by the encroachment on its prerogative. The elections were just over, and they had on the whole been favourable to the Government, and the Government was inflexibly opposed to

all concessions to the Convention. Yelverton, who was Attorney-General, in a speech of great power moved that the House should refuse even to take the Bill into consideration, as it originated with an armed body, and was an attempt to compel Parliament to register the edicts of another assembly, and to receive propositions at the point of the bayonet. Flood answered that he and his colleagues had never mentioned the volunteers. They came as members of Parliament to present a regular Bill in regular form. Would the House receive it from them? Under the Duke of Portland, the House had consented without difficulty to take a Reform Bill into consideration. The anomalies and abuses of the representation were glaring and notorious. Petitions from many counties showed the sense of the nation on the subject. Would Parliament refuse even to inquire into the grievance? He and his friends had not introduced the volunteers into the debate, but as they were introduced, he would not shrink from defending them. He recapitulated with great power their services to the Constitution, reminded the House how largely Parliament in its political struggle had rested upon them, and asked whether it was Parliament or the volunteers who had changed. A positive Act directs that every Protestant in Ireland is to bear arms, and 'because one man fulfils more of his duty as a citizen than another, should he enjoy less of a citizen's privilege?'

The debate was continued till three in the morning, and it terminated in the House refusing by 157 votes against 77 to receive the Bill. A resolution moved by the Attorney-General, to the effect that it had 'become necessary to declare that this House will maintain its just rights and privileges against all encroachments whatever,' and an address to the King moved by Conolly asserting the 'perfect satisfaction' of the House with the Constitution, and the determination to support it

with their lives and fortunes, were then carried. Grattan, in a few conciliatory words, supported the proposition to consider the Bill upon its own merits, but he voted silently for the ensuing resolution.[1]

This memorable night gave a fatal blow to the political influence of the volunteers. There were not wanting indeed among them wild spirits who would have gladly pushed matters to extremity, but Charlemont strained his influence to the utmost and succeeded in putting an end to the Convention. The debate in the House of Commons took place on Saturday night, and Charlemont with some difficulty persuaded the Convention, in spite of their previous resolution, to adjourn to the ensuing Monday. On Sunday he held a meeting of his own friends, and they agreed together, that the Convention must be dissolved. On Monday the 1st and on Tuesday the 2nd of December the Convention again met, and Flood fully supported Charlemont in advocating moderation. The Bishop of Derry and Sir Edward Newenham, who represented the more democratic party, were both present, and the debate appears to have been full and dignified. It was agreed to take no formal notice of the recent proceedings in Parliament. A resolution was passed asserting anew the manifest necessity of a parliamentary reform. The delegates agreed to forward the plan of reform adopted by the Convention to their several districts, and to endeavour by public meetings, petitions, instructions to members, and the publication of abuses to obtain for it a great weight of civil support. The Convention then proceeded to adjourn *sine die*. One of its last acts was an address to the King, which was composed and

[1] *Irish Parl. Debates*, ii. 225–264. The numbers in the first division are given erroneously in the *Parl. Debates* as 158 to 49. The Commons' *Journals*, however, and also a letter of Lord Northington (Nov. 30, 1783), give them as in the text.

moved by Flood, and which may be looked upon as its defence before the bar of history. In this remarkable document 'the delegates of all the volunteers of Ireland' begged 'to express their zeal for his Majesty's person, family, and Government, and their inviolable attachment to the perpetual connection of his Majesty's crown of this kingdom with that of Great Britain; to offer to his Majesty their lives and fortunes in support of his Majesty's rights, and of the glory and prosperity of the British Empire; to assert with an humble but an honest confidence that the volunteers of Ireland did, without expense to the public, protect his Majesty's kingdom of Ireland against his foreign enemies at a time when the remains of his Majesty's forces in this country were not adequate to that service; to state that through their means the laws and police of this kingdom had been better executed and maintained than at any former period within the memory of man, and to implore his Majesty that their humble wish to have certain manifest perversions of the parliamentary representation of this kingdom remedied by the Legislature in some reasonable degree, might not be imputed to any spirit of innovation in them, but to a sober and laudable desire to uphold the Constitution, to confirm the satisfaction of their fellow-subjects, and to perpetuate the cordial union of both kingdoms.'[1]

[1] See Grattan's *Life* iii. 159–162; Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 138–142; *Charlemont Papers*. There is a full report of the proceedings of the Convention in a pamphlet, called *Proceedings of the Volunteer Delegates of Ireland* (1784), and also in the *Hibernian Journal* for 1783. Barrington (*Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xix.) has grossly misrepresented the closing scenes of the Convention, accusing Charlemont of having come to the Hall before the usual hour on Monday, the 1st, with his own friends, and adjourned the Convention *sine die* before the arrival of the opposite party. As a matter of fact the debate extended over two days, and Flood, the Bishop of Derry, and all the other more conspicuous members of the Convention were present.

The Volunteer Convention was peacefully dissolved, but in the March of the following year Flood again brought the Reform Bill before Parliament. It was supported by petitions from twenty-six counties. It was introduced and defended with a moderation that could hardly offend the most sensitive politician, and there was no parade or menace of military force. As might have been expected in a Parliament where the Government was hostile to reform and where more than two-thirds of the members represented nomination boroughs, it was rejected almost with contempt. The House did not, it is true, as on the former occasion refuse leave for its introduction, but it was thrown out on the second reading by a majority of seventy-four.[1] From that time the conviction sank deep into the minds of many that reform in Ireland could only be effected by revolution, and the rebellion of 1798 might be already foreseen.

So ended a most unhappy episode in the history of Ireland. The divisions among the reformers had paralysed their force, and in the opinion of the great majority of the best judges, the creation of a Convention and the attempt to dictate measures to Parliament were gross political errors. There have always, however, been a few writers who have in this controversy adopted the side of Flood, who have maintained that if Grattan had not stood aloof and if Charlemont had been truly in earnest, the volunteers might have forced a reform Bill through Parliament, and that the transcendent importance of making the Irish Parliament a really representative body outweighed the great danger and evil of the precedent that would have been created. Sir Jonah Barrington, the brilliant Irish historian of the period, adopted this view, and it was strongly sup-

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 13-23, 43-85

ported by another writer whose name will have greater weight with English readers. Jeremy Bentham lived at a time when the recollection of the volunteer movement was still vivid, and he appears to have paid special attention to its history. He described the conduct of the volunteer organisation during five troublous years as one of the very best illustrations in history of the high qualities of patriotism and self-control that are produced in a self-governed democracy. They 'exalted,' he said, 'the average mass of public and private felicity in Ireland to a pitch unknown before or since, and as at once a cause and a consequence of it, public and private virtue.' 'Commercial emancipation and parliamentary emancipation united the wishes of almost everybody . . . and nothing could be more evident than that but for the armed association they never could have been accomplished.' The pressure of the Convention, he thinks, was 'the only means by which any constitutional reform could have been effected,' and he attributes it wholly to the half-heartedness of Charlemont, of Grattan and their party, that 'Mr. Grattan's great and worthy rival Flood' did not succeed in carrying reform.'[1]

The question is not susceptible of any positive solution, and the difficulties on all sides seemed nearly insuperable. The experience of all countries shows that a monopoly of power, as complete as that which was possessed by a small group of borough owners in Ireland, is never, or scarcely ever, broken down except by measures bordering on revolution. The Reform Bill of 1832 would never have been carried, but for an agitation which convinced the most enlightened statesmen that the country could not be peacefully governed

[1] Bentham, *Radicalism not dangerous*, part iv.; *Collected Works*, iii. 613-620.

on any other condition. Yet the English monopoly before 1832 was but a faint shadow of that Irish Parliament, in which more than two-thirds of the representatives were nominated by individual patrons, and a majority were dependent on a few great families. Corruption ever follows monopoly as the shadow the substance, and where political power was concentrated in so few hands, party management necessarily resolved itself into personal influence. The Protestant yeomanry of the North, and the great bulk of the Protestant gentry, found themselves either unrepresented or most inadequately represented; and these classes, who comprised most of the intelligence, and a great preponderance of the property, of the country, mainly constituted at this time both the volunteers and the reformers of Ireland.[1]

To create popular, but at the same time purely Protestant, institutions was the aim of Charlemont and Flood, and the whole history of the volunteer organisation appears to me to show that the ascendant caste had attained a level of political intelligence and capacity which fully fitted it for increased political power.

[1] 'If property and fortune are the criteria of consequence, the members of the Convention were of equal importance, and possessed an equal interest in the public welfare as the members of the House of Commons. . . . There cannot be a more irrefragable argument in favour of a reform of Parliament than, originating with the people, that it should be embraced by almost every man of rank and fortune in the kingdom, except the individuals whose respective interests and usurpation were supposed to be affected by a more equal representation.' 'The Volunteer Reform Bill,' says the same writer, 'was neither fraught with speculative principles nor new-fangled doctrines; it dealt neither in experiment nor innovation, and though possibly not the best that human wisdom could devise, yet at least it must have had some excellencies to recommend it, from the almost unanimous applause that awaited it in every quarter of the kingdom.'—*History of the last Session of Parliament*, by a member of the sub-committee of the Convention (Dublin, 1784), pp. 9, 10.

Beyond this Flood and Charlemont refused to go. To place political power in the hands of the vast, ignorant, and turbulent Catholic peasantry would, they maintained, be an act of madness which would imperil every institution in the country, shake property to its very basis, and probably condemn Ireland to a long period of anarchy. I have already quoted the remarkable letter, in which as late as 1791 Charlemont predicted that a full century was likely to elapse before the mass of the Irish Catholics could be safely entrusted with political power;[1] and in his comments on the proceedings of the Convention of 1783, he expressed his views on the subject with great clearness. 'Every immunity,' he wrote, 'every privilege of citizenship should be given to the Catholics excepting only arms and legislation, either of which being granted them would, I conceive, shortly render Ireland a Catholic country, totally break its connection with England,' and force it to resort to the protection of France or Spain.[2] Flood, as we have seen, held very similar opinions, and it appears to have been partly in order to divert the volunteers from taking up the Catholic question that he pushed on so strenuously the question of reform. A democracy planted in an aristocracy, popular institutions growing out of an intelligent and ascendant class, formed their ideal, and the memory of ancient Athens with its democracy of 30,000 free citizens rising above a vast population of unrepresented slaves was probably present to many minds.

Such a reform, they maintained, would have at least placed the Irish Parliament on a secure basis, made it a real representative of the intelligence and property of Ireland, put an end to the inveterate system of corruption, and called the action of party government into full

[1] See p. 207. [2] *MS. Autobiography.*

and healthy play. The result may appear to show that it would have been wise at almost any hazard, and without any delay, if possible, to have at this time forced a large infusion of the popular element into Parliament, but the result is a less decisive test than is often thought of the wisdom of statesmen. Politics are little more than a calculation of probabilities, and the train of events which appears reasonably the most probable does not always occur. If the course of the world for fifty years after 1782 had been as peaceful as it had been during the first three quarters of the century, reforms might probably have been introduced by slow steps, and no great catastrophe would have occurred. Mere political difficulties and ordinary wars had never seriously affected the loyalty and the peace of the country. The American Revolution with its direct and evident bearing on the relations of dependencies to the mother country was the first contest which acted powerfully upon opinion, and even its influence was of a very sober, measured, and rational kind. Unfortunately for the peace of Ireland, before the close of the century an event occurred which in its immediate moral and political effects was wholly unequalled since the great religious convulsions of the sixteenth century. The fierce spirit of democracy, which the French Revolution had engendered, swept like a hurricane over Europe, lashed into sudden fury popular passions which had slumbered for centuries, and strained to the utmost every beam in the Constitution. Six or seven quiet years were granted to Ireland after her legislative emancipation to prepare for the storm, but when the first blast was felt, nothing had as yet been done, and the Parliament was as far as ever from a real representative of the nation.

I do not propose to examine the history of those years in very minute detail, and shall be content if I can sketch their general characteristics. In England

another revolution of power had taken place, which was destined to exercise a great influence in Ireland. The Coalition Ministry had fallen. Pitt came into power with an irresistible majority, and in February 1784 Lord Northington left Ireland, and the Duke of Rutland succeeded him as Viceroy, with Thomas Orde as his Chief Secretary. For some months after the dissolution of the Convention a dangerous agitation might be discerned. 'A rage for supporting the Convention,' wrote one of Charlemont's best informed correspondents, 'has laid hold on the yeomanry.'[1] The Northern prints were full of passionate addresses, and the Bishop of Derry in emphatic language urged the volunteers to make the political emancipation of the Catholics one of their first objects.[2] The Government, alarmed at his proceedings, for a time contemplated the possibility of prosecuting him, and induced a gentleman from the neighbourhood of Derry to attach himself to him as a spy in order to learn his intentions, and to discover whether it was true, as they suspected, that he was importing arms from Birmingham.[3]

The distress which had been so severe in 1783 still continued. In the beginning of 1784 a proclamation was issued forbidding the export of oats, oatmeal, and barley, and Irish letters continually speak of food risen almost to famine prices; of great multitudes of workmen unemployed; of riots to prevent the transport of food from one part of the country to another; of non-importation agreements; illegal combinations of workmen; industry in all its forms lamentably depressed. The cry for protecting duties became louder and louder,

[1] Sam. Maxwell to Charlemont, Jan. 3, 1784. *Charlemont Papers.*

[2] See his remarkable letters, Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, c. xx.

[3] March 20, 1784 (most secret and confidential), Rutland to Sydney. See, too, Grattan's *Life*, iii. 137, 138.

and in February an amendment pointing to them was moved by Sir Edward Newenham in the discussion on the address. It was rejected without a division, but Rutland wrote that 'the most difficult subject which is likely to be introduced is that of the protecting duties, which is much more earnestly called for from the distresses which are brought upon the poor, and especially the manufacturers, by the extraordinary inclemency of the season.'[1] Gardiner, one of the members for Dublin, who was aggrieved with the Government because they had not given him a peerage which had been promised,[2] placed himself at the head of the movement, and he was afterwards supported by Flood.

Resolutions in favour of protecting duties were more than once introduced, and the question was debated at great length, and with great ability. It was argued that Irish industries could never really flourish unless Parliament adopted the policy of giving native manufactures a decided preference in the home market. History, the supporters of the resolutions said, proved that England and France, and every other country which was at liberty to pursue its own interest, had uniformly pursued this plan, and they only asked the Irish Parliament to follow the example of Great Britain herself, 'of all her wise ministers and of all her wise Parliaments since the Revolution.' A poor country could never,

[1] Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 26, 27, 1784. *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 374.

[2] See in the Rutland Correspondence, letters of Pitt to Rutland, Feb. 1, and of Buckingham to Pitt, Jan. 23, 1785. Buckingham says of Gardiner: 'I certainly held myself authorised to hold it [a peerage] out to him in case of his support, which he promised, stating, however, that he had pledged himself to move that question [protecting duties] after the recess, but that he would take the first moment to quit it, and to return to that system from which he had been driven by Lord Northington.

without protective duties, compete even in her domestic market with a far more wealthy neighbour. The long-established manufactures of England could always undersell the unprotected industries of Ireland. Great capitalists could easily afford some temporary loss in order to drive feebler rivals from the field, and the English manufacturer was ready to give two years' credit, while the Irish trader could not give more than six months. The Irish woollen manufacture, which England had formerly so absolutely suppressed, had been in some small degree revived since the more liberal legislation of the last few years; but in spite of the peculiarly excellent quality of Irish wool, it was impossible to maintain it, for while prohibitory laws still excluded Irish wool from the English market, an overwhelming English competition crushed it at home. 'The only way to serve the manufacturers of Ireland was to put them on an equal footing with the English artists, to lay such duties on the import of woollens as might serve to counterbalance the great capitals of the English, the low price of their wool, and their great exactness in furnishing goods.' Prohibitory duties were not asked, and the demand was not made in any spirit of hostility to England. It arose 'from a commiseration for the distresses of the wretched inhabitants of the country, and not from any party spirit or factious motive whatsoever.' The primary cause of the prevailing distress is to be found 'in a radical error of our commercial system, which nothing but the interference of the Legislature can effectually remove.' 'England has flourished from adopting protecting duties, and Ireland has sunk by neglect of them.' 'Will any man in this House refuse to put the Irish manufacturer upon an equal footing with the Englishman? Is it possible that so just, so equitable a proposition can be rejected?'

Such arguments, urged at a time of acute commer-

cial distress, and supported by the example of nearly every country in Europe, and by numerous petitions from the manufacturing classes, could hardly fail to have much influence on opinion, but the demand was strenuously resisted. Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who led the opposition, urged that the prevailing distress was much more local, and much more due to temporary causes than had been said; that the effect of protective duties would be, that Irish manufactures would deteriorate in quality and increase in price; that the measure the House was asked to adopt would inevitably throw England into an attitude of hostility, and produce reprisals, and that the probable result of such reprisals would be the total ruin of the principal industry of Ireland. The Irish linen manufacture mainly depended on the English market. The immense importance of that market was shown by the fact that while the whole value of English manufactures imported into Ireland was less than one million, Irish linens alone exported to England were valued at a million and a half.[1] England encouraged them by a small bounty, but this was a trifling matter and might be easily replaced. She assisted the manufacture much more effectually by admitting it to her market duty free. This was her compensation for the many Irish industries she had suppressed and excluded, and if this liberty were withdrawn the effects would be most calamitous. England would transfer her linen trade to Germany, and Irish linen would be excluded by heavy duties from her market, as it already was from the chief markets on the Continent.

These arguments did not convince the manufacturers, and it was remarked that none of the linen manufacturers opposed the petition for protecting duties,

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 129.

while some of the most considerable actively supported it, maintaining that the country was likely to gain more by moderate duties than she could suffer from any proceeding which Great Britain could find it her interest to take.[1] The political dangers of entering into a commercial contest with England were probably more keenly felt, and the resolutions in favour of protecting duties were rejected by overwhelming majorities. The House of Commons, however, felt that something must be done to meet the wishes of the distressed manufacturers, and that a future conflict with England on commercial questions could only be averted by a commercial arrangement on the basis of reciprocal advantages. After some discussion, an address to the King was unanimously voted on May 13, 1784, in which, after warm protestations of gratitude and loyalty, the House expressed their hope 'that the interval between the close of the present session and the beginning of the next, will afford sufficient opportunity for forming a wise and well-digested plan for a liberal arrangement of commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland to be then brought forward,' and added 'that his faithful Commons humbly beg leave to assure his Majesty that such a plan, formed upon the broad basis of reciprocal advantage, would be the most effectual means of strengthening the Empire at large, and cherishing the common interest and brotherly affection of both kingdoms.'[2]

This address had afterwards important consequences. Some new bounties on manufactures were about the same time granted, and a measure was taken which exercised an influence of the most powerful kind on Irish agriculture. Foster's Corn Law of 1784, granting large bounties on the exportation of corn and imposing heavy

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 135 178. [2] Ibid. p. 223.

duties on its importation, is one of the capital facts in Irish history. In a few years it changed the face of the land, and made Ireland to a great extent an arable instead of a pasture country.

I have devoted, in a former volume, a considerable space to the causes and effects of the immense predominance of pasture in Ireland during the earlier years of the century.[1] The great and dominant cause was, I believe, that nature has made Ireland a supremely good pasture country, while as a wheat-growing country it is much below the average of Europe; but there were, as we have seen, many subsidiary causes strengthening the tendency. Such were the penal laws; the political and social insecurity which made landlords prefer the simplest type of property; the bad farming which was prevalent; the unjust exemption of pasture from the burden of tithes; the fact that the bulk of the population, and that section which increased most rapidly, lived not upon bread but upon potatoes. It was also a very important consideration that England, till near the close of the century, was a wheat-exporting country. Ireland could find no steady market there, for, except in years of great scarcity, importation was discouraged by heavy duties, and in good years English corn, encouraged by the large English bounty on exportation, and checked by no duty in Ireland, flowed in, in overwhelming quantities, and beat down the price of native corn.

The evils of this state of things were peculiarly felt on account of the great want of manufactures. In the eighteenth, as in the nineteenth century, the main economical evil of Ireland was the small number of its productive industries. The great want of a variety of employments had thrown the population to an unhealthy degree for subsistence on the soil, and pasture

[1] See vol. i. pp. 219-226.

could only support a much smaller population than tillage. Several laws had already been passed, chiefly in periods of great distress, for the encouragement of tillage, but most of them were perfectly inefficient. English influence dominated in Irish legislation, and would suffer no measure that could interfere with the English corn trade, and Irish landlords, for the reasons I have mentioned, had a general leaning towards pasture. Some bounties on exportation were granted in 1707, but they were far smaller than those in England, and they only came into operation when the price had sunk to a level which it scarcely ever reached. They were slightly increased in 1756, in 1765, and in 1774, but were still too low to have any considerable effect. The Act of 1729, making it compulsory to till five acres in every hundred, was little more than a dead letter, and no great result can have followed from the Act of 1765, which offered premiums to the landlords and farmers in each county who had the largest quantities of corn on stands four feet high, and with flagstones at the top. Some considerable effect in stimulating tillage is, however, said to have been produced by those curious Acts which offered bounties on the inland carriage, and a few years later on the carriage, by the coast, of corn to Dublin; and under these Acts, 882,149*l.* was paid in bounties between 1762 and 1784.[1] But the great and decisive impulse towards tillage in Ireland was not produced until the memorable law of Foster, which was modelled on the English corn laws, as they had existed since the Revolution. It granted a bounty of 3*s.* 4*d.* a barrel on the export of wheat as long as the home price was not above 27*s.* a barrel; and other very considerable bounties on the

[1] Newenham's *View of the Natural, Political, and Commercial Circumstances of Ireland* (1809). This valuable book contains the fullest account I know, of the corn legislation in Ireland.

exportation of flour, barley, rye, oats, and peas; and it at the same time laid a duty of 10*s.* a barrel on imported wheat when the home price was under 30*s.*; and a number of other duties, varying according to the home price, on the importation of the other articles that have been mentioned.[1]

As I have already observed, the value of corn bounties was one of the points on which the opinions of the eighteenth century differed most widely from those of our own generation. In Ireland it was the almost unanimous belief of all the most competent authorities towards the close of the century, that the corn bounties of Foster had proved an inestimable benefit to the nation. Newenham, who of all writers has most fully examined the economical condition of Ireland in the period we are considering, described Foster's Act as incomparably the most beneficent Irish measure of the eighteenth century, and as especially, and in the highest degree, beneficial to the small farmers and labourers. From that time, he maintains, acute distress in Ireland ceased;[2] manufactures flourished in consequence of increased profits in agriculture; and while population rapidly augmented, the well-being of all classes steadily rose.[3] These views

[1] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 19. This is a very long and complicated Act. The reader may find a tolerable abstract of its provisions in Newenham, pp. 213, 214.

[2] P. 143.

[3] See the very elaborate examination of the subject in Newenham's *View of the Circumstances of Ireland*, and in the same writer's work on *The Population of Ireland*, pp. 44–50. See, too, Crumpe's *Essay on the Employment of the People* (1793), pp. 260–272; Mullala's *View of Irish Affairs since the Revolution*, ii. 128–131. Both Newenham and Crumpe argue elaborately against the views of Adam Smith on the subject. One of the very few instances of a contemporary unfavourable view of the corn bounties in Ireland, will be found in a memorial of Rich. Burke to Dundas. Burke's *Correspondence*, iv. 46–57. The writer, however, admits that the corn trade created by the bounties, was at first very lucrative.

appear to have been very generally held, and the corn bounties received the warm and almost unanimous approbation of Parliament. It is impossible, indeed, to question the magnitude of the change that followed them. Vast pasture lands were rapidly broken up into small tillage farms; corn mills were erected in every quarter of the land, and a great corn trade was produced. The quantity of corn, meal, and flour exported in twelve years after the passing of the Act exceeded that which was exported in the eighty-four years that preceded it. Its value in ten years after 1785 was about four millions and a quarter.[1] The large number of farmers who held leases for life or for a considerable period, that had not yet expired, made great and sudden gains, and there was a rapid rise in the rental of land. Newenham, writing in 1808, expressed his belief 'that since the year 1782 the rent of land, which a short time before that year had begun to fall in many places, has been much more than doubled in all parts of Ireland one with another, more than trebled in many; and that the greatest rise has been in those counties where tillage has been most pursued;' while the average price of agricultural labour, which was only $6\frac{1}{2}d.$ when Arthur Young visited Ireland, had risen in the next thirty years to $10\frac{1}{2}d.$ Foster's Act, he says, 'may fairly be considered as the great primary cause of the unprecedented increase of wages that has taken place in Ireland since the year 1778.'[2]

Modern economists of the school of Adam Smith, will probably refuse to attribute to the corn bounties the undoubted progress and prosperity of Irish agriculture in the last sixteen years of the century, and will point to other causes which made tillage at that time unusually profitable. It may, however, I think, be

[1] Newenham's *Circumstances of Ireland*, pp. 215, 216.
[2] Ibid. pp. 230, 231

truly claimed for Foster's Act, that in a country where there was very little capital and enterprise, it turned agriculture decisively and rapidly in this profitable direction. It was enacted at the time when the growth of the manufacturing population in England had begun to press heavily on the nation's means of subsistence. England ceased to be a wheat-exporting country. Her vast market was thrown open to Irish corn, and a few years later the great French war raised the price of wheat almost to a famine rate and made the profits of corn culture proportionately large.

It is quite true that a great and sudden increase of prosperity is never likely to be a permanent benefit to an improvident and uneducated people. The corn bounties appear to have contributed largely to that excessive subdivision of farms which became ultimately so disastrous; to an increase of population out of all proportion to the permanent resources of the country; to modes of cultivation which, in order to obtain large and speedy returns, exhausted and impoverished the soil.[1] The artificial system which turned into a wheat-growing country a land which nature had intended for

[1] See the powerful statement of the case against corn bounties in M'Culloch's *Account of the British Empire*, i. 438, 439, 531, 532. The ruinous practice of skimming off and burning the surface of old grass lands was probably largely stimulated by the corn bounties, for it was found that the ashes produced in this manner made the soil peculiarly fitted for the speedy growth of great crops of wheat or potatoes. This practice had already prevailed in Ireland under George II., but it acquired extraordinary dimensions in the early years of the present century, and has probably seriously diminished the productive powers of Irish land. Much information about it will be found in a curious and valuable pamphlet called *Help for Ireland*, by William Pilkington (5th ed. London, 1887). For an enumeration and description of the Irish laws on the subject see McNally's *Justice of the Peace for Ireland* (1820), art. 'Burning Land.' Ramsay (*Scotland and Scotsmen in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 193–196) notices the evil effects of the same practice in Scotland.

pasture was necessarily transient, and with the great fall of prices that followed the peace and with the subsequent adoption by England of the policy of Free Trade the whole economical condition of Ireland was again changed. But during the closing years of the eighteenth century, legislation and circumstances had undoubtedly combined to give an immense impulse to agriculture, and on agriculture more than on any other single influence the prosperity of Ireland depended.

These results, however, were not immediately attained, and the rejection of the protecting duties in 1784 at first produced considerable disturbances. Rutland had soon to report a long series of outrages in the metropolis of the most dangerous kind. Soldiers were more than once called in to repress them, and they became the objects of fierce popular animosity. Several were brutally houghed by butchers in the streets, and the crime assumed such dimensions that a special Act was passed to make it capital, and to throw the support of the wounded soldiers on the district if the culprit was not detected.[1] Many tradesmen or artisans, who had imported English goods, or worked at low wages or in branches of manufacture to which they had not been bred, or who had come up from the country to work in Dublin when Dublin workmen were on strike, were tarred and feathered after the American fashion or otherwise ill used. On one occasion a man, who had been concerned in some of these outrages, being publicly whipped, the mob attacked the soldiers on guard, who fired, killed one man, and wounded several others. On another a threatening mob burst into the gallery of the House of Commons, and it was found necessary to call in soldiers to eject them. On a third the Duke of Rutland was hooted in a theatre. A paving

[1] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 56.

Act, which was supposed to press heavily on the poorer ratepayers, was the cause, or, as the Government believed, the pretext, of new disturbances. Houses were attacked, members of Parliament were insulted, threatening letters became very common, and a Press of the most savage and seditious nature had arisen. One paper, called 'The Volunteer's Journal,' was especially conspicuous for its scarcely disguised advocacy of assassination, and three men were actually arrested on a charge of being concerned in a conspiracy for assassinating seven members of Parliament, who were conspicuous in opposing protecting duties. With inefficient watchmen, timid magistrates, and a fierce mob, these outrages passed almost unpunished. There were vague rumours, resting on no real evidence, that French influence was concerned in them, and that officers of the Irish brigade in the French service had secretly come over to Ireland. It was, however, the firm conviction of the Lord Lieutenant that some of the 'master manufacturers' were at the bottom of the outrages, and that considerable sums had been subscribed to foster them.[1]

They appear to have been almost exclusively confined to Dublin. In April, Rutland, while describing

[1] Feb. 26, April 12, 1784, Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential). Next day Orde wrote: 'We are really in a very disagreeable situation in respect to internal disorder. Those accursed manufacturers, pent up in a vile suburb of the city, are brooding mischief upon the instigation, no doubt, of more considerable persons among the weavers. Their machinations are the more alarming, because there is no doubt of their design to commit private assassination. Every discovery we make tends to confirm it, and the *glorious* idea is kept alive by the encouragements of the newspapers and the pulpits. . . . It is a damnable scene, and I most cordially detest it.' Orde to Nepean, April 13, 1784. There are several other letters on the subject, written in the spring and summer of 1784. See, too, *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 419–421, iii. 147–158.

their magnitude, added: 'I have the satisfaction at the same time to find that the country is in a perfect state of quiet. The judges have finished their circuits, and at no place whatsoever did the grand juries show any spirit of discontent or any attempt at innovation. I hear of violence nowhere but in the metropolis.'[1] Even in Dublin the disturbances, though for a time very serious, in a few months subsided, and a Press Bill, which was introduced by Foster, did much to check them. It provided that the true names of every newspaper proprietor must be registered; made receiving or offering money for printing or forbearing to print libels a high misdemeanour, and prevented the sale of unstamped papers in the streets.[2] Towards the close of the year, however, the Whiteboy disturbances broke out again with great violence in the county Kilkenny and spread widely over several counties.

An incident, which occurred in Dublin in the spring of 1784, added seriously to the alarm. The 'Liberty' corps of the volunteers—so called because it was recruited in the Earl of Meath's liberties, where the woollen manufacturers chiefly dwelt—thought fit without consulting any other volunteers to advertise for recruits, and enlisted about two hundred of the lowest class, who were chiefly Roman Catholics. Such a proceeding was wholly contrary to the wishes of Charlemont, to the general custom of the volunteers, and to the law which forbade Catholics to carry arms without licence, and at a time when the spirit of outrage was so rife in Dublin it was peculiarly dangerous. The other corps of the volunteers marked their disapprobation by refusing to join the Liberty corps at their exercises; but neither the Government nor the leaders

[1] Rutland to Sydney, April 28, 1784.

[2] 23 & 24 Geo. III. c. 28; *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 154.

of the volunteers ventured to take the decisive step of disarming the new recruits, and the example of Catholic enlistment began to spread.[1]

The change, indeed, which was now taking place in the character of the volunteer body, was especially alarming. The original volunteers had consisted of the flower of the Protestant yeomanry, commanded by the gentry of Ireland, and in addition to their services in securing the country from invasion in a time of great national peril, they had undertaken to preserve its internal peace, and had discharged with admirable efficiency the functions of a great police force. But after the signature of peace, and, again, after the dissolution of the Volunteer Convention, a great portion of the more respectable men connected with the movement considered their work done and retired from the ranks, and they were being replaced by another and wholly different class. The taste for combining, arming, and drilling had spread, and had descended to the lower strata of society. Demagogues had arisen who sought by arming and organising volunteers to win political power, and who gathered around them men who desired for very doubtful purposes to obtain arms. Grattan, who at all times dreaded and detested anything that withdrew political movements in Ireland from the control and guidance of the gentry, was one of the first to denounce the change. 'I would now

[1] 'I was satisfied that the old corps, who are very completely appointed and pique themselves as gentlemen upon their manners and appearance, and upon being men in substantial circumstances, would not submit to unite with the meanest and poorest rank; and I expected that the expense of clothing and arming the people, the encouragement the plan must give to idleness, and the dislike of other corps to the measure, would frustrate the attempt. The event hitherto has in a great degree justified my expectations.' Rutland to Sydney, May 19, 24, 1784.

draw the attention of the House,' he said, 'to the alarming measure of drilling the lowest classes of the populace. . . . The old, the original, volunteers had become respectable because they represented the property of the nation, but attempts had been made to arm the poverty of the kingdom. They had originally been the armed property of Ireland. Were they to become the armed beggary?' 'The populace,' he added, 'differ much and should be clearly distinguished from the people,' and he spoke of the capital that has been drained, the manufacturers who have been deterred, the character of the nation that has been sunk by indiscriminate arming, and by the establishment of representative bodies unconnected with Parliament.[1]

The debates of this year furnish many illustrations of the growing evil. One speaker complained that men whom the old volunteers emphatically repudiated, and with whom they refused in any way to associate, 'men of no property and of every persuasion,' were of their own authority forming themselves into separate armed corps. In Kerry, men calling themselves volunteers beat off one of his Majesty's sloops of war with their small arms, and in many places men assuming the same name were in receipt of daily pay. Another speaker stated that in some of the recent Dublin riots volunteers had remained absolutely passive, and refused when summoned to assist the civil power. A third had seen two sergeants, in back parts of Dublin, drilling two parties of seventy or eighty ragged and dangerous-looking ruffians, and when he accosted them he found that they were acting entirely on their own authority, being determined, as they told him, that when a rebellion or disturbance broke out, they would have armed men at their command. Fitzgibbon, who was

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 41, 42. See, too, pp. 237, 238.

now Attorney-General, said that the great majority of the original volunteers had hung up their arms and retired to cultivate the arts of peace, and that their places were often taken by men of the worst character. He asserted that one corps, called the 'Sons of the Shamrock,' had voted every Frenchman of character an honorary member, and that he had himself seen resolutions inviting the French to Ireland, and enthusiastic eulogies of Lewis XVI. It was reported that officers of the Irish brigade in the French service had come over to engage volunteers. The law forbidding Catholics to carry arms without licence had hitherto been enforced, and it was regarded even by the Catholic gentry as of vital importance to the peace of the country, for while the more respectable Catholics readily obtained licences, it gave the Government the power of restraining, in a very lawless and turbulent country, the great masses of the rabble from the possession of arms. But now, under the colour of volunteering, and in direct defiance, not only of the letter of the law, but also of the wishes of the commander of the volunteers, an extensive and indiscriminate arming of Catholics was going on, and the Lord Lieutenant complained that great quantities of arms were being scattered through the very lowest section of the population.[1]

In Ulster, it is true, the volunteers retained much of their primitive character, and Charlemont for many years presided at their annual reviews; but in other parts of the country, and especially in Dublin, the change was very marked. In a letter written in 1793, Charlemont, while deploring the shameful and utter degradation of the Dublin volunteers, incidentally mentioned that though he was still their nominal com-

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 225, 227, 279, 280, 294. See, too, the letters of Rutland and Orde during the latter half of 1784.

mander, they had, for many years past, in no one instance asked his advice, nor had they ever taken it when it was offered.[1]

The disquiet caused by these things was very evident. In the House it was frequently expressed, and when a partisan of the volunteers recalled the former votes of thanks to the volunteers, and proposed another similar vote, Gardiner moved an amendment, which was strongly supported by Grattan and carried by a great majority, expressing high approbation of those who since the conclusion of the war had retired to cultivate the blessing of peace.[2] The letters of the Lord Lieutenant for some time showed the anxiety with which he regarded the continuance of the volunteer movement and especially the arming of Catholics. The creation of a purely Protestant militia was the favourite remedy, but both the English and Irish Governments agreed that an attempt to disarm or even to prohibit the volunteers would be extremely dangerous, and that it was best to trust to the probability that in times of peace they would dwindle away.[3] The prevision was on the whole justified; in a few years complaints on the subject almost ceased; but a portion of the volunteers were still in arms when the French Revolution called all the disaffected elements in Ireland into activity.

By far the greater part of the disturbances of 1784 and 1785 were probably due to no deeper cause than commercial depression acting upon a very riotous population, and with the return of prosperity they gradually ceased; but there was a real and dangerous element of political agitation mixing with the social disquietude. The decisive rejection of Flood's Reform Bill, in spite

[1] Charlemont to Halliday, Feb. 26, 1793.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 266–297. Orde to Nepean, Feb. 19, 1785.

[3] See Rutland to Sydney, Oct 25, 1784; English instructions to Rutland, Jan. 11, 1785; Sydney to Rutland, Jan. 7, 1786; Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 27, 1786

of the many petitions in its favour, and the refusal of the House of Commons to impose protective duties, stimulated political agitation, and the question of the Catholic franchise now began to rise into prominence. Several of the opponents of Flood's Reform Bill had made the omission of the Roman Catholics an argument against it;[1] and some of the supporters of that Bill accused the Government of raising the Catholic question in order to divide and weaken the reformers.[2] On the other hand a democratic party had arisen, who, following the advice of the Bishop of Derry, contended that the best way of breaking the power of the aristocracy and carrying parliamentary reform was to offer the franchise to the Catholics, and thus enlist the great body of the nation in the agitation. Dr. Richard Price, the eminent Nonconformist minister who was so prominent among the reformers in England, wrote to the volunteers: 'I cannot help wishing that the right of voting could be extended to Papists of property in common with Protestants;' and Todd Jones, one of the members for Lisburn, published a letter to his constituents strongly advocating the measure. In July 1784 an address in this sense was presented to Lord Charlemont by the Ulster volunteers who were reviewed at Belfast; but Charlemont in his reply, while reiterating his adhesion to parliamentary reform, pronounced himself strongly against Catholic suffrage.[3]

In Dublin a small knot of violent and revolutionary reformers, chiefly of the shopkeeper class, had arisen,

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[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 54 65, 69.

[2] See a pamphlet by Sir Lucius O'Brien, called *A Gleam of Comfort to this distracted Empire* (London, 1785).

[3] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 228–230. Rutland, in relating this, says that Charlemont's answer 'brought upon him the most virulent abuse in the public prints, but it is no more than the lot of every man, who differs in the smallest degree from whatever may be the popular cry of the moment.' To Sydney, July 21, 1784.

and some of them were members of the Corporation. Napper Tandy, the son of an ironmonger in the city, was the most conspicuous, and he afterwards rose to great notoriety. By the exertions of this party, meetings in favour of reform were held in Dublin. A permanent committee was created, and in June 1784 this committee invited the sheriffs of the different counties to call meetings for the purpose of electing delegates to meet in Dublin in the ensuing October. This was an attempt to revive in another form the convention of the previous year, with this great distinction, that it was to have no connection with any armed force, but was to be a true representative of the Irish Protestants. In many quarters the idea was accepted with alacrity, and the Government did not distinctly challenge the legality of the congress; but Fitzgibbon, by a strained and unusual construction of law, treated the conduct of the high sheriff of the county of Dublin, in summoning a meeting to elect delegates, as a contempt of the Court of King's Bench; proceeded against him before that court by the method of 'attachment,' and without the intervention of a jury caused him to be condemned to a small fine. The legality of this proceeding was much disputed by Flood, and by lawyers in the Parliaments both of England and Ireland. Erskine was consulted on the subject, and he wrote a remarkable letter in which he asserted that the conduct of the King's Bench judges was such a gross and daring usurpation that it would justify their impeachment, and that the precedent, if acquiesced in, would be in the highest degree fatal to liberty in both countries.[1]

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 221 226. I am quite incompetent to give any opinion on the subject. Pitt in a private letter to Orde (Jan. 12, 1785) writes: 'I have had some conversation with your Attorney-General on the subject of the attachments, who defends his cause very ably and puts it in the best light it can admit of.

The feeling in favour of reform continued to be very strong throughout the country, and it was accompanied with great irritation against the majority in Parliament. The prediction of Flood that without a reform of Parliament there was no security for the stability of the present Constitution, and that a corrupt majority might one day overturn it, had sunk deeply in the popular mind, and petitions to the King poured in from many quarters, describing the House of Commons as having wholly lost the confidence of the nation and fallen completely into the hands of a corrupt oligarchy. One petition which came from Belfast[1] attracted special notice from its openly revolutionary character. It stated that the majority was 'illegally returned by the mandates of Lords of Parliament and a few great Commoners, either for indigent boroughs where scarcely any inhabitants exist or for considerable towns where the elective franchise is unjustly confined to a few . . . that the House of Commons is not the representative of a nation, but of mean and venal boroughs . . . that the price of a seat in Parliament is as well ascertained as that of the cattle of the fields,' and that although the united voice of the nation had been raised in favour of a substantial reform, yet 'the abuse lying in the very frame and disposition of Parliament itself, the weight of corruption crushed with ignominy and contempt the temperate petitions of the people.' Under these circumstances, said the petitioners, the repeated abuses and perversion of the representative trust amounted to a virtual abdication and forfeiture in the trustees, and they had summoned 'a civil convention of representatives to be freely chosen by every county and city and great town in Ireland . . . with authority to determine

Still, I think it a matter of great delicacy and caution, and enough has been done already.' —*Correspondence of Pitt and Rutland.*

[1] July 1784.

in the name of the collective body on such measures as are most likely to re-establish the Constitution on a pure and permanent basis.' They accordingly asked the King to dissolve the Parliament and 'to give efficacy to the determination of the convention of actual delegates, either by issuing writs agreeably to such plan of reform as shall by them be deemed adequate, or by co-operating with them in other steps for restoring the Constitution.'

In such language it is easy to recognise the strong democratic fervour which was arising in the North, but the gentry of Ireland had in general no sympathy with such views, and although, in spite of all obstacles, the congress met in October 1784, and again in the following January, it proved to be a body of very little importance. Nearly all the more important persons either openly discountenanced it or only consented to be elected in order to keep out more dangerous men. Sir Edward Newenham, a warm partisan of Flood, a strong advocate of parliamentary reform, and also a strong opponent of Catholic suffrage, seems to have been the most prominent of its active members. The Bishop of Derry did not attend. Flood only appeared once. The Catholic question speedily divided the members, and little resulted from the congress except some declamatory addresses in favour of parliamentary reform which had very little effect upon opinion.

It is a question of much difficulty whether the Catholics themselves took any considerable part in these agitations. For a long period an almost death-like torpor hung over the body, and though they formed the great majority of the Irish people they hardly counted even in movements of opinion. Even when they were enrolled in volunteer corps there were no traces of Catholic leaders. There was, it is true, still a Catholic committee which watched over Catholic inte-

rests; Lord Kenmare and a few other leading Catholics were in frequent communication with the Government; two or three Catholic bishops at this time did good service in repressing Whiteboyism, and Dr. Troy, who was then Bishop of Ossory, received the warm thanks of the Lord Lieutenant,[1] but for the most part the Catholics stood wholly apart from political agitation. The well-known Father O'Leary indeed had one day visited the Volunteer Convention in 1783 and had been received with presented arms and enthusiastic applause, and one of the corps had even given him the honorary dignity of their chaplain.[2] In the same Convention when the Bishop of Derry brought forward the question of Catholic suffrage a strange and very scandalous incident occurred. Sir Boyle Roche, a member of Parliament who was well known for his buffoonery, but who was also a prominent and a shrewd debater, closely connected with the Government and chamberlain at the Castle, rose and asserted that Lord Kenmare having heard that the question was about to be raised had sent through him a message explicitly disavowing on the part of the Catholics any wish to take part in elections. Such a communication at such a time had naturally great weight, but it was speedily followed by a resolution from the Catholic Committee declaring that it was totally unknown to them, and a few days later by a letter from Lord Kenmare stating that no such message had been sent, and that the use of his name was entirely unauthorised. Sir Boyle Roche afterwards explained that he considered the conduct of the Bishop and his associates so dangerous that 'the crisis had arrived in which Lord Kenmare and the heads of the Catholic body should step forth to disavow those wild projects and to profess their attachment to the lawful powers.'

[1] Plowden, ii. 107, 108. [2] England's *Life of O'Leary*, p. 105.

Unfortunately Lord Kenmare and most of the other leading Catholics were at this time far from Dublin, and therefore, 'authorised only by a knowledge of the sentiments of the persons in question,' he considered himself justified in inventing the message. It is a strange illustration of the standard of political honour prevailing in Ireland that a man who, by his own confession, had acted in this manner continued to be connected with the Government and a popular speaker in the House of Commons.[1]

It was true, however, that Lord Kenmare and several other prominent Catholics were not favourable to the Convention, that their influence was uniformly exerted against political agitation, and that on this ground many of their co-religionists were beginning to desert them.[2] The question of giving votes to the Catholics was first raised with effect by an Anglican bishop and by some Presbyterian agitators, but there is reason to believe that in Dublin Catholics were being slowly drawn into the vortex. A few years later, as we shall see, they were numerous among the followers of Napper Tandy, and as early as 1784 the Irish Government attributed most of the disturbances to French instigation, and a large proportion of the seditious writing to Popish priests.[3] It is now impossible to

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 119–122.

[2] Wyse's *History of the Catholic Association*, i. 103.

[3] 'I have discovered a channel by which I hope to get to the bottom of all the plots and machinations which are contriving in this metropolis. As I always expected, the disturbances which have been agitated have all derived their source from French influence. There is a meeting in which two men named Napper Tandy and John Binney, together with others who style themselves free citizens, assemble. They drink the French King on their knees, and their declared purpose is a separation from England and the establishment of the Roman Catholic religion. At their meetings an avowed French agent constantly attends, who is no other than the person in whose favour the French ambassador desired Lord Carmarthen to write to me a formal introduction. . . . One of this meeting, alarmed at

ascertain how far such suspicions were justified. For some months a panic prevailed which made men very credulous. A thousand rumours, as the Chief Secretary himself said, filled the air. False testimony was very common. None of the reports that reached the Castle appear to have been tested in the law courts, and in a short time all serious alarm had passed away. It is, however, antecedently probable that the contagion of political agitation was not unfelt in the Catholic body, and that they were not insensible to the overtures of the democratic party. The Government at least thought so, and they sent over two or three spies to Ireland to ascertain the secret sentiments of the Catholics. There is grave reason to believe that among these spies was a man whose literary and social gifts had given him a foremost place among the Irish Catholics and whose character ranked very high among his contemporaries. Father O'Leary, whose brilliant pen had already been employed to vindicate both the loyalty and the faith of the Catholics and to induce them to remain attached to the law, appears to have consented for money to discharge an ignominious office for a Government which distrusted and despised him.[1]

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the dangerous extent of their schemes, has confessed, and has engaged to discover to me the whole intentions of this profligate and unprincipled combination.' Rutland to Sydney (most secret), Aug. 26, 1784. 'We are now very certain that most of the abominable letters and paragraphs in the public papers are written by Popish priests. We shall, I really believe, be very soon able to get sufficient evidence which we may make use of, to apprehend and arrest them. We shall be assisted by the principal persons, especially by the titular prelates, who are earnest to express and manifest their reprobation of such excesses.' Orde to Nepean (most private), April 30, 1784.

[1] Sept. 4, 1784, Sydney writes to Rutland, 'O'Leary has been talked to by Mr. Nepean, and he is willing to undertake what is wished for 100*l.* a year which has been granted him.' On Sept. 8 Orde writes to Nepean thanking him for sending over a spy or detective named Parker, and adds, 'I am very glad also that you

It may, however, I think, be confidently stated that the suspicion of the Government that French influence was at the bottom of the disturbances in Ireland, and that an agent connected with the French ambassador was directing them, was without foundation. For several years, it is true, foreign statesmen had given some slight and intermittent attention to Irish affairs. We have already seen this in the case of Vergennes,[1] and in the correspondence of Lord Charlemont there is a curious letter from St. Petersburg written by Lord Carysfort complaining of the evil effects which the Volunteer Convention and the growing suspicion on the Continent that Ireland was about to follow the example of America were likely to have on English influence

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have settled matters with O'Leary, who can get at the bottom of all secrets in which the Catholics are concerned, and they are certainly the chief promoters of our present disquietude. He must, however, be cautiously trusted, for he is a priest, and if not too much addicted to the general vice of his brethren here, he is at least well acquainted with the art of raising alarms for the purpose of claiming a merit in doing them away.' On Sept. 23 he writes, 'We are about to make trial of O'Leary's sermons and of Parker's rhapsodies. They may be both in their different callings of very great use. The former, if we can depend upon him, has it in his power to discover to us the real designs of the Catholics, from which quarter, after all, the real mischief is to spring The other can scrape an acquaintance with the great leaders of sedition, particularly Napper Tandy, and perhaps by that means may dive to the bottom of his secrets.' On Oct. 17 he writes to Nepean, alluding to some rumour about O'Leary which is not stated, 'Del Campo's connection with O'Leary, or rather O'Leary's with him, may have given rise to all the report, but after all I think it right to be very watchful over the priest and wish you to be so over the minister. They are all of them designing knaves.' The Christian name of this O'Leary is nowhere given, nor is anything said about his being a monk; and as the surname is a very common one, it is possible that the person referred to may not have been the well-known writer. Considering, however, the important position and connections attributed to this O'Leary, the conjecture is, I fear, an improbable one.

[1] Pp. 231, 232.

and on English commercial negotiations.[1] But the very full and confidential correspondence which Count d'Adhémar, the French ambassador at London, carried on at this time with his Government, sufficiently shows that he had no agent employed in Ireland and little or no knowledge of Irish affairs which might not have been derived from the public newspapers and from the current political gossip of London. Though D'Adhémar believed firmly in the high character and sincerely pacific disposition of Pitt, he was persuaded that peace with France would only continue as long as England was too weak for war. The nation, he said, ulcerated by the humiliation of the last war, was implacably hostile, and would soon force its Government into a renewed struggle. In the interval French influence should be employed to injure England wherever she was weak, and the two quarters in which it might be most profitably exerted, were India and America.

In April 1784 he first called attention to affairs of Ireland. He mentions the great excitement produced in the English as well as the Irish newspapers by Foster's Press Bill; the skill with which Fox had already made use of it; the probability that it would assist him in the Westminster election which was now pending. He afterwards reports that the Viceroy had been attacked on account of the Press Bill; that the Irish corporations were protesting against it; that non-importation agreements were multiplying; that the affairs of Ireland were taking a very serious turn. The Government, he believed, were anxious to disavow Foster, and a courier had started for Ireland for the purpose of suspending the operation of the Bill. He knew, from a good source, that ministers had desired to arrest the Bishop of Derry, but were prevented by a

[1] Lord Carysfort to Charlemont, Sept. 10, 1784. *Charlemont Papers.*

division in the Council. The Duke of Rutland was anxious to resign, and the Duchess had lately written to a lady friend in England, expressing her anxiety about the incapacity of her husband and the frightful growth of the spirit of insurrection. There had been a meeting at the Dublin Town Hall, presided over by the municipal officers, at which the corrupt constitution of Parliament was unanimously denounced. 'There is a military association which has been deliberating about presenting an address to Lewis XVI., the defender of the rights of the human race.' From the accounts of the volunteer reviews it appeared to the ambassador, that more than 70,000 men were under arms. 'Even if no other advantage,' he added, 'came from threatening the British coast, the calling this great force under arms would have been a great one.'[1]

The tension, however, soon passed, and several years elapsed before French ministers were seriously occupied with Ireland. The next few years of Irish history were quiet and uneventful, and although no great reform was effected, the growing prosperity of the country was very perceptible. The House of Commons gave the Government little or no trouble, and whatever agitations or extreme views may have been advocated beyond its walls, the most cautious conservative could hardly accuse it of any tendency to insubordination or violence. It consisted almost entirely of landlords, lawyers, and placemen. Its more important discussions show a great deal of oratorical and debating talent, much knowledge of the country and considerable administrative power; it was ardently and unanimously attached to the Crown and the connection, and the accumulation of borough interests at the disposal of the Treasury, and the habi-

[1] Letters of Count d'Adhémar, April 23, May 7, June 18, Aug. 8, 1784, French Foreign Office.

tual custom of 'supporting the King's Government,' gave the Government on nearly all questions an overwhelming strength. The majority had certainly no desire to carry any measure of reform which would alter their own very secure and agreeable position, or expose them to the vicissitudes of popular contests, but the influence of the Government was so overwhelming that even in this direction much might have been done by Government initiative, and it is remarkable that in all the letters of the Irish Government opposing parliamentary reform, nothing is said of the impracticability of carrying it. On the whole, it would be difficult to find a legislative body which was less troublesome to the Executive. There was one subject and only one upon which it was recalcitrant. It was jealous to the very highest degree of its own position as an independent Legislature, and any measure which appeared even remotely designed to restrict its powers and to make it subordinate to the British Parliament, produced a sudden and immediate revolt.

The prosperity of the country was advancing, and the revenue was rising, but the expenses of the Government still outstripped its income, and there were loud complaints of growing extravagance. Many things had indeed recently conspired to increase the national expenditure. Free trade opening out vast markets for Irish products, had induced Parliament to give larger bounties for the purpose of stimulating native manufactures. The erection of a magnificent custom-house; great works of inland navigation; an augmentation of the salaries of the judges in 1781; additional revenue officers required by an expanding trade; additional officials needed for the New National Bank, fell heavily on the finances. In 1783 an independent member proposed that the salary of the Lord Lieutenant should be raised from 16,000*l.*, at which it had been fixed twenty-

two years before, to 20,000*l.* It was argued that the expense of the office was notoriously greater than its salary; that the constant residence of the Lord Lieutenant, the annual sessions of Parliament, and the increased cost of living had largely augmented it, and that it was not in accordance with the dignity of the nation, that an English nobleman should be obliged to appropriate part of his private fortune to support the position of Viceroy of Ireland. The augmentation was refused by Lord Northington, but accepted by his successor, and it was speedily followed by the addition of 2,000*l.* a year to the salary of the Chief Secretary. Strong objections were made to the latter proposal, and it appears to have been carried mainly on account of a speech of the Attorney-General, who promised that it would put an end to the scandalous system of granting great Irish offices for life to retiring Chief Secretaries. Some of the chief offices in the country had been thus bestowed, and with the single exception of Sir John Blaquiere all those who held them lived habitually in England.[1] In 1784 three new judges were appointed, and the introduction of annual sessions of Parliament involved some necessary and legitimate expenditure, and probably contributed not a little both to parliamentary prodigality and Government corruption. 'The contention for parliamentary favour,' it was said, 'became in a manner perpetual. The doors of the temple were never shut,'[2] and the increased importance of the House of Commons made Government more and more desirous of securing by pensions and sinecures an overwhelming parliamentary influence.

There was a strong desire to bring back the great Irish offices to the country. In the beginning of the reign of George II. it was noticed that among the

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 202 204. [2] Ibid. vi. 73, vii. 137, 138.

habitual absentees were officers of the Irish Post Office, whose salaries amounted to 6,000*l.* a year; the Master of the Ordnance; the Master of the Rolls; the Lord Treasurer and the three Vice-Treasurers; the four Commissioners of the Revenue; the Secretary of State; the Clerks of the Crown for Leinster, Ulster, and Munster; the Master of the Revels, and even the Secretary of the Lord Lieutenant.[1] One of the most scandalous Irish measures in the early years of George III. had been the grant of the Irish Chancellorship of the Exchequer for life, to Single Speech Hamilton, in 1763. He was allowed to treat it as an absolute sinecure, and the management of Irish finances was thrown for many years upon the Attorney-General, a busy lawyer who had no special knowledge of the subject. Although the value of the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer was only 1,800*l.* a year, the Government after a long negotiation consented in 1784 to buy it back from Hamilton by the grant of a life pension on Ireland of 2,500*l.* a year, with the power to sell his pension.[2]

The office, however, was admirably bestowed, being granted to John Foster, one of the very foremost figures in the Irish Parliament. He was the son of that Chief Baron Foster whom Arthur Young had described as one of the ablest men, and one of the best and most improving landlords in Ireland, and he had already taken the leading part in the foundation of the National Bank. He was also the author of some measures which had been extremely successful in encouraging the linen trade, as well as of the corn bounties which we have already considered. That excellent judge, Woodfall, described him as 'one of the readiest and most clear-headed men of business' he had ever met with,[3] and no one, I think,

[1] Newenham's *State of Ireland*, p. 110.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 405, v. 145, viii. 365, ix. 258, 259.

[3] *Auckland Correspondence*, p. 80.

can read his speeches without being struck with the singular ability and the singular knowledge they display. His strong opposition to protecting duties; his Press Bill, and the prominent and very able part which he took in defence of the commercial propositions of 1785, made him for a time unpopular in Dublin; but his high character and his great financial knowledge were universally recognised. In the autumn of 1785, when Pery retired from the Chair which he had occupied for more than fourteen years, Foster was unanimously elected Speaker, and he held that position till the Union. He still, however, occasionally contributed some admirable speeches to the debates. He was succeeded as Chancellor of the Exchequer by Sir John Parnell.

Several other great offices were still held by absentees,[1] but none of them were as important as the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. In 1784, there was a curious discussion on the habitual absence of the Master of the Rolls, and it was defended by the Attorney-General Fitzgibbon, on the very grotesque ground that it was conducive to the good administration of justice. 'If the Master of the Rolls,' he said, 'was compelled to become a resident and efficient officer, it would render the business of the Court of Chancery more prolix and tedious than it is at present.' There would be another appeal in Chancery suits, and 'this would be attended with delay and inconvenience to suitors, and would give great additional reason to curse the law's delay.'[2] The office was held by Rigby, who had no other connection with Ireland since he had ceased to be Chief Secretary in the first year of the reign. On his death in 1788, it was brought back to

[1] See *Irish Parl. Deb.* ii. 203.

[2] Ibid. iii. 87. The same debate brought out some curious illustrations of the manner in which the Court of Chancery was conducted in Ireland.

Ireland, but it was still treated as a mere lucrative sinecure and was given to the Duke of Leinster.[1]

This abuse at last gradually ceased. Some offices were bought back by pensions, though often on most extravagant terms.[2] Others fell in by death; the feeling on the subject in Parliament was generally strong enough to prevent fresh appointments to absentees, and the Government in Ireland desired to employ all their patronage at home in resisting the movement for a parliamentary reform.

The position of the English Government on the question of reform varied at different times, but on the whole English statesmen were usually considerably more liberal than the Administration in Ireland. Pitt came to power with the reputation of a great parliamentary reformer, and he was at first seriously desirous of carrying out his early pledges and of fulfilling the programme of his illustrious father. If reform was needed anywhere, it was needed in Ireland, and if it was carried in one country it was tolerably certain that it would be impossible to resist it in the other. His confidential letters to the Duke of Rutland are preserved, and they show that he was at one period sincerely anxious to reform the Irish Parliament, though he was at this time equally determined not to admit the Catholics to power. 'The line to which my mind at present inclines,' he wrote ('open to whatever new observations or arguments may be suggested to me), *is to give Ireland an almost unlimited communication of commercial advantages*, if we can receive in return some security that *her strength and riches will be our benefit, and that she will contribute from time to time in their increasing proportions to the common exigencies of the Empire; and having*

[1] Sydney to Buckingham, June 10, 1788.
[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 69.

by holding out this, removed, I trust, every temptation to Ireland to consider her interests as separate from England, to be ready, while we discountenance *wild and unconstitutional attempts, which strike at the root of all authority*, to give real efficacy and popularity to the Government by acceding (if such a line can be found) to a *prudent and temperate reform of Parliament*, which may guard against, or gradually cure, *real* defects and mischiefs, may show a sufficient regard to the interests and even prejudices of individuals who are concerned, and may unite the Protestant interest in *excluding the Catholics from any share in the representation* or the government of the country.'[1] He begs Rutland to sound the dispositions of Charlemont and the other reformers, and says, 'By all I hear accidentally, the parliamentary reformers are alarmed at the pretensions of the Catholics, and for that very reason would stop very short of the extreme speculative notions of universal suffrage.' 'Let me beseech you,' he adds, 'to recollect that both your character and mine for consistency are at stake unless there are unanswerable proofs that the case of Ireland and England is different; and to recollect also, that however it is our duty to oppose the most determined spirit and firmness to ill-founded clamour or factious pretensions, it is a duty equally indispensable to take care not to struggle but *in a right cause*.' 'I am more and more convinced in my own mind every day, that some reform will take place in both countries. Whatever is to be wished (on which, notwithstanding numerous difficulties, I have myself no doubt), it is, I believe, at least certain that if any reform takes place here, the tide will be too strong to be withstood in Ireland.' 'If it be well done, the

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Oct. 7, 1784. This correspondence is now published. The italics are in the original.

sooner the better.' 'Should there appear, after a certain time, a prospect that the complete arrangement of commercial questions will be followed by some satisfaction on this essential point of reform, I believe the arms will then drop out of the hands of the volunteers without a struggle.' He only desired that the Irish Government should not commit itself irrevocably to reform 'while the question is undecided in England.'[1]

The Irish Administration, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to any measure of reform. They had got their majority by the small borough system, and they wished to keep it, and opposed a strong passive resistance to every attempt from England to impel them in the direction of reform. The chief governor was naturally surrounded by great borough owners, whose personal interests were bound up with the existing political system, and the spirit both of resistance and of anti-Catholicism was very greatly strengthened when, on the promotion of Yelverton to the Bench in 1783, Fitzgibbon became Attorney-General. This remarkable man, who for the last sixteen years of the century exercised a dominant influence in the Irish Government, and who, as Lord Clare, was the ablest, and at the same time the most detested, advocate of the Union, had in 1780 opposed the Declaration of Right moved by Grattan in the House of Commons, but had supported the policy of Grattan in 1782, and had used strong language in censuring some parts of the legislative authority which Great Britain exercised over Ireland.[2] It is very questionable whether he ever really

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Oct. 7, Dec. 4, 1784; Jan. 11, 12, 1785.

[2] In a remarkable letter to his constituents of the University of Dublin, he said, in 1780, 'I have always been of opinion that the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for this country is a daring usurpation of the rights of a free people, and have uniformly asserted the opinion in public and in private.' He says

approved of the repeal of Poyning's Law, and his evident leaning towards authority made him distrusted by several leaders of the popular party, but Grattan does not appear to have shared the feeling, and when he was consulted on the subject by Lord Northington, he gave his full sanction to the promotion of Fitzgibbon.[1] For some time there was no breach between them, and in one of his speeches in 1785 Fitzgibbon spoke in high terms of the character and services of Grattan,[2] but the dispute on the commercial propositions appears to have separated them, and Fitzgibbon soon followed the true instincts of his character and his intellect, in opposing an iron will to every kind of reform. In private life he appears to have been an estimable and even amiable man; several acts of generosity are related of him, and the determination with which in spite of a large inherited fortune he pursued his career at the bar, shows the energy and the seriousness of his character. He is said not to have been a great orator, but he was undoubtedly a very ready and skilful debater, a great

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that although he had opposed the Declaration of Rights when it was first moved, he would now yield his opinion to that of his constituents and support it, but that he could not support a total repeal of Poyning's Law. He adds, 'There is not a doubt in my mind that a perpetual Mutiny Bill lays the foundation of a military despotism in this country; on this principle I will, while I live, make every effort in my power to procure a repeal of it.' O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Chancellors of Ireland*, ii. 166, 167.

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 134, 200, 201.

[2] 'From the first I have ever reprobated the idea of appealing to the volunteers, though I was confident Ireland was in no danger while they followed the counsel of the man whom I am proud to call my most worthy and honourable friend [Mr. Grattan]; the man to whom this country owes more than, perhaps, any State ever owed to an individual; the man whose wisdom and virtue directed the happy circumstances of the times and the spirit of Irishmen to make us a nation. While the volunteers continued under his influence I feared no evil from them.'—*Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 286.

master of constitutional law, a man who in council had a peculiar gift of bending other wills to his own, a man who in many trying periods of popular violence displayed a courage which no danger and no obloquy could disturb. He was, however, in public life arrogant, petulant, and overbearing in the highest degree, delighting in trampling on those whom he disliked, in harsh acts and irritating words, prone on all occasions to strain prerogative and authority to their utmost limits, bitterly hostile to the great majority of his countrymen, and, without being corrupt himself, a most cynical corrupter of others. Curran, both in Parliament and at the bar, had been one of his bitterest opponents, and a duel having on one occasion ensued, a great scandal was created by the slow and deliberate manner in which, contrary to the ordinary rules of duels, Fitzgibbon aimed at his opponent,[1] and when he became Lord Chancellor he was accused of having, by systematic hostility and partiality on the bench, compelled his former adversary to abandon his practice in the court.[2]

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[1] Phillips' *Life of Curran*; Barrington's *Rise and Fall.*

[2] Phillips' *Life of Curran*, pp. 151, 152. Curran himself long afterwards wrote of this: 'Though I was too strong to be beaten down by any judicial malignity, it was not so with my clients; and my consequent losses in professional income have never been estimated at less, as you must have often heard, than thirty thousand pounds.' A passage from one of Fitzgibbon's speeches in Parliament against Curran may be given as a specimen of the kind of language he was accustomed to employ. 'The politically insane gentleman [Curran] has asserted much, but he only emitted some effusions of the witticisms of fancy. His declamation, indeed, was better calculated for the stage of Sadler's Wells than the floor of a House of Commons. A mountebank with but one half the honourable gentleman's theatrical talent for rant would undoubtedly make his fortune. However, I am somewhat surprised he should entertain such a particular asperity against me, as I never did him any favour. But perhaps the honourable gentleman imagines he may talk himself into consequence. If so, I should be sorry

As a politician, Fitzgibbon, though his father had been one of the many Catholics who abandoned their faith in order to pursue a legal career, represented in its harshest and most arrogant form the old spirit of Protestant ascendency as it existed when the smoke of the civil wars had scarcely cleared away, and he laughed to scorn all who taught that there could be any peace between the different sections of Irishmen, or that the century which had elapsed since the Revolution had made any real change in the situation of the country. A passage in his great speech in favour of the Union is the keynote of his whole policy. 'What, then,' he asked, 'was the situation of Ireland at the Revolution, and what is it at this day? The whole power and property of the country has been conferred by successive monarchs of England upon an English colony composed of three sets of English adventurers, who poured into this country at the termination of three successive rebellions. Confiscation is their common title, and from their first settlement they have been hemmed in on every side by the old inhabitants of the island, brooding over their discontents in sullen indignation.'[1]

In accordance with these views his uniform object was to represent the Protestant community as an Eng-

to obstruct his promotion; he is heartily welcome to attack me. One thing, however, I will assure him—that I hold him in so small a degree of estimation either as a man or a lawyer that I shall never hereafter deign to make him any answer.'—Grattan's *Life*, iii. 268. The scene is alluded to, but not reported, as being purely personal, in the *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 472. Woodfall, the famous parliamentary reporter, happened to be in the Irish House of Commons during this scene, and he has given a graphic description of it. *Auckland Correspondence*, i. 78, 79. No one, I think, who follows the reported speeches of Fitzgibbon, can fail to be struck with the extraordinary arrogance they display, and it is said to have been much aggravated by his manner. In Charlemont's *MS. Autobiography* there is an elaborate and exceedingly (I think unduly) unfavourable character of him.

[1] P. 22.

lish garrison planted in a hostile country, to govern steadily, sternly, and exclusively, with a view to their interests, to resist to the utmost every attempt to relax monopoly, elevate and conciliate the Catholics, or draw together the divided sections of Irish life. Even in the days when he professed Liberalism, he had endeavoured to impede the Catholic Relief Bill of 1778 by raising difficulties about its effect on the Act of Settlement; and after he arrived at power, he was a steady and bitter opponent of every measure of concession.[1] He was sometimes obliged to yield. He was sometimes opposed to his colleagues in Ireland, and more often to the Government in England, but the main lines of his policy were on the whole maintained, and it is difficult to exaggerate the evil they caused. To him, more perhaps than to any other man, it is due that nothing was done during the quiet years that preceded the French Revolution to diminish the corruption of the Irish Parliament, or the extreme anomalies of the Irish ecclesiastical establishment. He was the soul of that small group of politicians, who, by procuring the recall of Lord Fitzwilliam and the refusal of Catholic emancipation in 1795, flung the Catholics into the rebellion of 1798, and his influence was one of the chief obstacles to the determination of Pitt to carry Catholic Emancipation concurrently with the Union. He looked, indeed, upon the Union as shutting the door for ever against the Catholics, and it was only when it had been carried by his assistance, that he learned to his bitter indignation that the Government, without his

[1] 'My unalterable opinion is, that so long as human nature and the Popish religion continue to be what I know they are, a conscientious Popish ecclesiastic never will become a well-attached subject to a Protestant State, and that the Popish clergy must always have a commanding influence on every member of that communion.'—*Speech on the Union*, p. 69.

knowledge, had been negotiating secretly with their leaders.[1]

The possibility of a loyal Irish Parliament undergoing parliamentary and ministerial fluctuations, like those which are now frequent in the robust constitutional Governments of the colonies, never appears to have entered into his calculations, and he avowed very cynically that in his theory of a separate Parliament, corruption should be the normal method of government. 'The only security,' he said, 'which can by possibility exist for national concurrence, is a permanent and commanding influence of the English Executive, or rather of the English Cabinet, in the councils of Ireland.' 'A majority in the Parliament of Great Britain will defeat the minister of the day, but a majority of the Parliament of Ireland against the King's Government goes directly to separate this kingdom from the British Crown. . . . It is vain to expect, so long as man continues to be a creature of passion and interest, that he will not avail himself of the critical and difficult situation in which the Executive Government of this kingdom must ever remain under its present Constitution, to demand the favours of the Crown, not as the reward of loyalty and service, but as the stipulated price to be paid in advance for the discharge of a public duty.'[2] In one of the debates on the Regency he openly avowed that half a million had on a former occasion been spent to secure an address to Lord Townshend, and intimated very plainly that the same sum would, if necessary, be spent again.[3]

We can hardly judge such sentiments with fairness, if we do not remember that with the partial and disas-

[1] Lord Holland's *Mems. of the Whig Party*, i. 162. See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 402, 403.

[2] *Speech on the Union*, pp. 45, 46.

[3] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix. 181. Grattan more than once alluded to this speech.

trous exception of the American Legislatures, the experiment of free parliamentary life in colonies had not yet been tried, and also that the necessity of retaining a great Crown influence in the English House of Commons was still widely held. Nor was this view confined to party men or to active and interested politicians. In 1752 Hume published those political essays which are still among the most valuable and were on their first appearance by far the most popular of his works, and in one of these essays he inquires what it is that prevents the House of Commons from breaking loose from its place in the Constitution and reducing the other powers to complete subservience to itself. He answers that 'the House of Commons stretches not its power because such a usurpation would be contrary to the interests of the majority of its members. The Crown has so many offices at its disposal, that when assisted by the honest and disinterested part of the House it will always command the resolutions of the whole. . . . We may call this influence by the invidious appellations of corruption and dependence; but some degree and some kind of it are inseparable from the very nature of the Constitution, and necessary to the preservation of our mixed government.'[1]

To exactly the same effect is the judgment of Paley, whose treatise on moral and political philosophy appeared in 1785, and who devoted an admirable chapter to the actual working of the British Constitution. He asserts that about half of the members sitting in the House of Commons of England when he wrote, held their seats either by purchase or by the nomination of single patrons, and he urged with singular ingenuity that, however absurd it might appear in theory, some such system of representation was absolutely necessary

[1] Essay VIII. on *Independency of Parliaments.*

in the British Constitution to give cohesion and solidity to the whole, to counteract the natural centrifugal tendency which would otherwise lead the House of Commons to break loose from its place in the Constitution, and the natural tendency of its own democratic element to acquire a complete control over its policy. He describes the saying that an 'independent parliament is incompatible with the existence of a monarchy' as containing 'not more of paradox than of truth,' and he attributes the severance of the British colonies in North America from the mother country, mainly to the fact that the English Government held so little patronage in those colonies that it was never able to acquire a commanding and interested support in the colonial Legislatures.[1]

In such maxims we find principles very similar to those of Fitzgibbon, and they were unfortunately predominant in the Irish councils. 'The question of reform,' Rutland wrote to Pitt, 'should it be carried in England, would tend greatly to increase our difficulties, and I do not see how it will be evaded. In England it is a delicate question, but in this country it is difficult and dangerous to the last degree. The views of the Catholics render it extremely hazardous. . . . Your proposition of a certain proportionable addition to county members would be the least exceptionable, and might

[1] 'In the British colonies of North America the late Assemblies possessed much of the power and constitution of our House of Commons. The King and Government of Great Britain held no patronage in the country which could create attachment and influence sufficient to counteract that restless, arrogating spirit, which in popular assemblies, when left to itself, will never brook an authority that checks and interferes with its own. To this cause, excited perhaps by some unseasonable provocations, we may attribute, as to their true and proper original, we will not say the misfortunes, but the changes which have taken place in the British Empire.'—Paley's *Moral and Political Philosophy*, vi. ch. vii.

not, perhaps, materially interfere with the system of Parliament in this country, which, though it must be confessed that it does not bear the smallest resemblance to representation, I do not see how quiet and good government could exist under any more popular mode.'[1] 'The object of reform,' he wrote a few months later, 'is by no means confined to a correction of alleged abuses in the representation, but extends to a substantial change of parliamentary influence. Nothing short of that will satisfy the clamorous, and any such change will completely dissatisfy the friends of Government and the established Constitution.' He warned the Government that any change in the representation would strengthen and perhaps unite the factious elements in the nation—'the Dissenters, who seek for such an alteration in the Constitution as will throw more power

[1] June 16, 1784. Dr. Halliday, the founder of the Whig Club, in a letter to Charlemont, complains that 'an English Whig is only a Whig for England, but a Tory with respect to her dependencies,' and he adds: 'I have been candidly told that since the acknowledgment of our independency, nothing can preserve the integrity and peace of the Empire but a government of corruption in Ireland . . . that a truly democratic House of Commons, one really the representative of the people here, would shiver all to pieces.' April 10, 1785. *Charlemont Papers.* Lord Camden, who had pushed Whig principles during the American contest to their extreme consequences, was in Ulster in the summer of 1784, and he wrote a curious letter to the Duke of Grafton on the state of Ireland. 'There is one question,' he said, 'that seems to have taken possession of the whole kingdom, and that is the reform of Parliament, about which they seem very much in earnest. For who [*sic*] does wish so much for that reformation at home cannot with much consistence refuse it to Ireland, and yet their corrupt Parliament is the only means we have left to preserve the union between the two countries. But that argument will not bear the light, and no means ought in my opinion to be adopted that is too scandalous to be avowed. I foresaw when we were compelled to grant independence to Ireland the mischief of the concession, and that sooner or later civil war would be the consequence.' (Aug. 13, 1784.) Grafton's *MS. Autobiography.*

into their hands; . . . the Roman Catholics, whose superior numbers would speedily give them the upper hand if they were admitted to a participation in the Legislature; and those men who oppose the Government upon personal considerations.'[1] In accordance with these views we find him, at the very time when the demand for reform and retrenchment was at its height, advocating the creation of new places for the purpose of strengthening the parliamentary influence of Government.[2]

In sharp contrast with these views was the policy of Grattan and of a small number of able and patriotic men who followed his standard. Grattan clearly perceived that after the great triumph that had been achieved and the great agitation that had been undergone, it was necessary to pacify the public mind, to lead it back to the path of gradual administrative reform, to strengthen the Executive against the spirit of disorder, and at the same time to discourage all feeling of disloyalty to England. We have already seen how he

[1] Rutland to Sydney, Jan. 13, 1785.

[2] On April 19, 1784, he writes a 'most secret and confidential' letter to Sydney about the growing independence of the Irish House of Lords. 'A greater attention and a more expensive influence than heretofore will therefore be required, if we seek, as we must, to direct its progress in the right way. A share also of the lucrative favours of Government must be set aside for the purpose of gaining attachments in that House, as the invention of mere external allurements will no longer maintain the influence which they may for a moment acquire.' He complains of 'the scantiness of the provision which is in the disposal of Government for the support of an increased and increasing number of claimants,' urges the 'necessity of taking some measure as early as possible for the enlargement of our means,' and says, 'it will be absolutely incumbent upon me to endeavour to establish in that House the strongest and most immediate connection of Administration with a certain number of powerful members, who may be at all times looked to for the declaration and explanation of the intentions and wishes of Government.'

looked upon the Renunciation Act, the Volunteer Convention, and the proposed diminution of the military establishments. In 1782, when the Dublin weavers resolved to enter into a non-importation agreement, he dexterously defeated the design by substituting for it a subscription list, pledging all who signed to purchase Irish goods to the amount placed opposite their names.[1] He steadily opposed the agitation for protecting duties which would have separated the commercial interests of England and Ireland.[2] He was foremost in denouncing a portion of the Irish press which was openly inciting to assassination, and which had lately introduced a detestable system, that already existed in England, of extorting money from timid individuals by threats of slander, and in spite of the violent outcry that was raised, he cordially supported Foster's Press Bill.[3] The tone of the seditious press he justly described as a matter deserving the most serious consideration of Parliament. 'I have no idea,' he said, 'of wounding the liberty of the Press, but if it be suffered to go on in the way it is at present, one of two things must ensue: it will either excite the unthinking to acts of desperation,

[1] May 18, 1782, Portland to Shelburne.

[2] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 289.

[3] Plowden, ii. 89. 'Government has been necessarily under very great difficulties, and must feel much obligation to those persons who have assisted in bringing about the fortunate event [the passing of the Press Bill]. It is really but justice to Mr. Grattan that I should put him at the head of such a list. The manly and decisive tone in which he pointed out the necessity of some regulations and restrictions, and of securing the liberty of the Press (to use his own expression) *against the attacks of the printers*; the fair and explicit justice which he did to Administration by stating the nature of their proposition and their declared readiness to conciliate unanimity by any concession which on fair discussion should be generally thought advisable, had altogether a striking effect upon the House, and contributed greatly to make the whole measure acceptable.' Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential), April 12, 1784.

or it will itself fall into utter contempt, after having disgraced the nation.'[1]

In 1785, when the Government resolved to organise the militia chiefly for the purpose of rendering the volunteer force unnecessary, Grattan gave them his full support; and when this measure was represented as an offence to the volunteers, he repudiated the argument with a scathing severity. 'The volunteers,' he said, 'had no right whatever to be displeased at the establishment of a militia, and if they had expressed displeasure, the dictate of armed men ought to be disregarded by Parliament.' 'We are the Legislature and they the subject.' 'The situation of the House would be truly unfortunate if the name of the volunteers could intimidate it. . . . That great and honourable body of men, the primitive volunteers, deserved much of their country, but I am free to say that they who now assume the name have much degenerated. . . . There is a cankered part of the dregs of the people that has been armed. Let no gentleman give such men countenance, or pretend to join them with the original volunteers.' He looked with extreme disapprobation on all attempts to set up rival centres of political power outside Parliament, and at the risk of a complete sacrifice of his popularity he censured in strong terms the national congress which had assembled in Dublin, asserting that, whether it was legal or not, such a body was not reconcilable with a House of Commons; that 'two sets of representatives, one *de jure*, and another supposing itself a representative *de facto*, cannot well co-exist,' and that it was such meetings that 'gave the business of reform the cast and appearance of innovation and violence.' 'The populace,' he said, 'differ much and should be clearly distinguished from the people.'

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iii. 166.

'An appeal to the latent and summary powers of the people should be reserved for extraordinary exigencies. The rejection of a popular Bill is no just cause for their exertion.'[1]

No politician had ever less sympathy than Grattan with disorder and anarchy; and his whole theory of Irish politics was very far from democratic. From first to last it was a foremost article of his policy that it was essential to the safe working of representative institutions in Ireland that they should be under the full guidance and control of the property of the country, and that the greatest of all calamities would be that this guidance should pass into the hands of adventurers and demagogues. He desired the House of Commons to be a body consisting mainly of the independent landed gentry and leading lawyers, and resting mainly on a freehold suffrage; and he would have gladly included in it the leading members of that Catholic gentry who had long been among the most loyal and most respectable subjects of the Crown. He believed that a body so constituted was most likely to draw together the severed elements of Irish life; to watch over Irish interests; to guide the people upwards to a higher level of civilisation and order; to correct the many and

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 237, 238; Grattan's *Life*, iii. 214–216. Orde, describing the debates, says: 'Mr. Grattan, in a most able and ingenious speech, condemned in the strongest terms the meeting of the congress as not existing in the principles of the Constitution, and destroying the very existence of Parliament. He pointed out the illegality of some of the addresses and resolutions, and several of the county meetings where, all the inhabitants being admitted, the rights of freeholders were overturned and wrested from them by the populace. He described the change that those violences had made in the volunteer institutions, that they had formerly consisted of responsible and respectable characters, whereas now Roman Catholics were admitted, and the lowest and most riotous of the people were armed.' Orde to Nepean, Jan. 26, 1785.

glaring evils of Irish life. But in order that it should perform this task, it was indispensable that it should be a true organ of national feeling; a faithful representative of educated opinion and of independent property; able and willing to pursue energetically the course of administrative reform which was imperatively needed. It was necessary above all that the system of governing exclusively by corruption and family interest should be terminated. Such a system was absolutely inevitable in a Parliament constituted like that of Ireland, and without any one of the more important legislative guarantees of parliamentary purity that existed in England.

Grattan would gladly have left it to the Government to take the initiative in the question of parliamentary reform, but when that question was introduced he strongly maintained, in opposition to the Government, that the Bills which were brought before the House should at least be suffered to go into committee, to be discussed, modified, and amended in detail. While opposing a reduction of the military establishments he maintained that for this very reason civil retrenchment ought to be more earnestly pursued, and he vainly attempted to procure an inquiry into the expense of collecting the revenue. He complained that this expense had risen between 1758 and 1783 from 81,000*l.* to 157,000*l.*, from 13 to 16 per cent. of the revenue, and that it was a common thing to grant by royal prerogative large additional salaries to sinecure or perfectly insignificant offices, held by supporters of the Government, in order that their names should not appear in the pension list. Grattan vainly tried to procure a parliamentary condemnation of this system of masked pensions, and he dilated in many able speeches on the absolute necessity of reducing the expenditure within the limits of the public income.

During the Administration of Lord Northington he gave the Government an independent support. In the following Administrations, when the influence of Fitzgibbon became supreme, when it became evident that the Government was opposed to all serious retrenchment and reform, when pensions and offices were created with the obvious purpose of increasing parliamentary influence, Grattan passed gradually into opposition, and endeavoured to create an organised party capable, if any change occurred, of taking the reins of power. He was at this time undisputed leader of his party. Flood reintroduced his Reform Bill in the spring of 1785, and he afterwards concurred heartily with Grattan in opposing the amended commercial propositions; but after this time he rarely appeared in the Irish Parliament, and he died in 1791. Charlemont had never much parliamentary influence, and the Bishop of Derry soon after the episode of the Convention left Ireland on the plea of ill health, and spent the remaining years of his life in Italy, where he led a wild and profligate life, and at length died at Albano in 1803.[1]

The measures advocated by Grattan and the small party who followed him, during the period we are considering, were usually of the most moderate character. A place Bill limiting the number of placemen who sat

[1] Some very curious letters of the Bishop in 1795-6 to the Countess de Lichtenau (the mistress of the King of Prussia) will be found in the memoirs of that lady. The Bishop was a great patron of art in Italy. He appears to have openly professed materialist opinions. On the outbreak of war between England and France, he was imprisoned by the French for eighteen months at Milan. Several particulars relating to his Italian life will be found in the *Life of Lady Hamilton*, in the *Personal Memoirs of Pryse Lockhart Gordon*, i. 172-177, and in Lord Cloncurry's *Personal Recollections*, 190, 191. See, too, the enthusiastic dedication to the Bishop, of Martin Sherlock's curious *Lettres d'un Voyageur Anglois* (1779), and also Brady's *Anglo-Roman Papers*, 197-200.

in the House of Commons, copied from that which for more than eighty years had existed in the English statute book; a pension Bill limiting the number of pensioners; a responsibility Bill giving additional guarantees for the proper expenditure of different branches of the revenue, and a disenfranchisement of revenue and custom-house officers like that which had been carried in England under Rockingham, would at this time have satisfied their demands. But such demands were met with a steady resistance. Nothing was done to diminish the evil, and, on the contrary, it continued to increase. It was alleged in Parliament, apparently with perfect truth, that in the beginning of 1789, exclusive of the military pensions, the pension list had risen to 101,000*l.* a year, and that pensions to the amount of 16,000*l.*, many of them distributed among members of Parliament, had been created since March 1784, besides considerable additional salaries which had been added to obsolete, useless, and sinecure offices in the hands of members of Parliament.[1] Grattan in the beginning of 1790 described in a few graphic words the condition of the House of Commons. 'Above two-thirds of the returns to this House are private property; of those returns many actually this moment sold to the minister; the number of placemen and pensioners sitting in this House equals near one-half of the whole efficient body; the increase of that number within the last twenty years is greater than all the counties in Ireland.'[2]

The rights which Irish commerce had attained in the last few years have already been described. The very liberal legislation of Lord North had granted Ireland the

[1] See the resolutions of Forbes, Feb. 11, 1790, and Grattan's speech, Feb. 20, 1790 (Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 237, 238, 243).

[2] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 210 (Feb. 1, 1790).

full right of direct trade with the English plantations of Africa and America, on the sole condition of establishing the same duties and regulations as those to which the English trade with the plantations was subject, and also a full participation of the English trade with the Levant, while the subsequent establishment of her legislative independence had left her absolutely free to regulate her trade by treaty with all foreign countries. The monopoly of the East India Company still excluded her from the Asiatic trade, but in the present condition of her undeveloped manufactures this was not considered a matter of any real importance. The trade between England and Ireland was of course regulated by the Acts of their respective Parliaments. Ireland admitted all English goods either freely or at low duties; she had not imposed any prohibitory duty on them, and whenever she laid heavy duties on any article which could be produced in Great Britain, she had almost always excepted the British article.[1] The British Parliament had excluded most Irish manufactures, and especially Irish manufactured wool, by duties amounting to prohibition, but in the interest of English woollen manufacturers it freely admitted Irish woollen yarn, and in the interest of Ireland it admitted linen, which was the most important article of Irish manufacture, without any duty whatever, and even encouraged it by a small bounty. 'The whole amount of the British manufacture which Ireland actually takes from England under a low duty,' said Pitt, 'does not amount to so much as the single article of linen which we are content to take from you under no duty at

[1] See *The Proposed System of Trade with Ireland explained* (1785), pp. 31, 32. This very able pamphlet was written by George Rose, who took a leading Part in pitt's commercial legislation. It was commonly called 'the Treasury pamphlet,' and attracted much attention from being understood to represent most fully the views of the Government.

all.'[1] Either Parliament had the right of altering this arrangement, and it was tolerably certain that if Ireland imposed prohibitory taxes on English goods, England would pursue a corresponding policy towards Irish linen. By a construction of the Navigation Act, foreign commodities could not be carried into England by or through Ireland, and although Ireland had the right of trading directly with the colonies, she was prohibited from sending plantation goods to England, or receiving them from her.[2] She might, however, send her own manufactures to Africa and America, and bring back to Great Britain all their produce.[3]

Pitt was one of the few persons who perceived that a perpetual free trade between the two countries would be an advantage to both, and he hoped to frame such a treaty as would unite the two parts of the Empire indissolubly both for military and commercial purposes, would put an end to all possibility of a future war of hostile tariffs, and, without altering essentially the existing constitutional arrangements, would at the same time add considerably to the military strength of the Empire. He proposed that a treaty should be carried, establishing for the future perfect free trade between the two countries. But as such a treaty, throwing open to Ireland the enormous markets of England, and securing to her for ever the market of the plantations, would be a much greater boon to Ireland than to England, Ireland might reasonably be expected to purchase it by paying a fixed contribution in time of peace and war to the general defence of the Empire. The terms of the proposal were very clearly stated in a confidential letter

[1] Pitt to the Duke of Rutland, Jan. 6, 1785. Fitzgibbon stated at this time that the imports from England did not exceed one million, and the exports to England exceeded two millions and a half.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 178, 188.

[3] *The System of Trade with Ireland explained*, p. 20.

from Sydney to Rutland: 'Your grace should endeavour to obtain, at the same time with the intended commercial regulations, an act of the Parliament of Ireland appropriating the future surplus of the hereditary revenue . . . to the Navy and general defence of the Empire . . . leaving the manner of applying it, and of having it particularly accounted for, to the Parliament of this country. It should also be explicitly understood, first, that any mode of contribution to be thus established is not to be made a pretext for withdrawing any part of the aid now given by the Irish Parliament towards the general expenses of the Empire, in the maintenance of the regiments upon the Irish establishment serving out of this kingdom, and, secondly, that such a fund is considered only as a means for defraying . . . the ordinary expenses of the Empire in time of peace, and that Ireland will still in case of war or any extraordinary emergency be called upon and expected voluntarily to contribute, as in reason and justice she ought, to such further exertions as the situation of affairs and the general interests of the Empire may from time to time require.'[1] The hereditary revenue was selected as the source of the proposed contribution for two reasons—because it consisted mainly of custom and excise duties, the increase in which would, it was anticipated, be a direct consequence of the commercial boons that were offered; and because the proposition was likely to be more palatable to the Irish Parliament as it gave that Parliament a right of appropriating for ever to objects in which Ireland had an essential interest, a portion of the revenue which was now 'entrusted to the general direction of the Crown.'[2] The Navy was selected for the application of the fund because it would always be in part employed to defend the coast and the

[1] Sydney to Rutland, Jan. 6, 1785 (most secret and confidential).
[2] Ibid. Feb. 1, 1785.

commerce of Ireland. The Parliaments of the two nations were in the first instance to be asked to carry resolutions embodying these terms, and these resolutions were then to be turned into Bills.

Before the plan was brought into Parliament it was fully discussed in confidential letters which passed between the English and Irish Governments, and the Lord Lieutenant clearly stated what were likely to be the Irish objections to the scheme. The creation of a free trade between England and Ireland was the great offer made to Ireland, but there was a party in Ireland who looked upon this much more as an evil than as a good. It would for ever prevent Ireland from improving her manufactures by protecting duties or special bounties on exportation, and would secure the ascendency which great capital, extensive establishments, and a settled position had given to English manufacturers even in the Irish market. The plantation trade ought surely, it would be said, not to be made an element in a new bargain, for it had been already granted to Ireland under Lord North, and he had in this respect only replaced Ireland in the position she had occupied before the amended Navigation Act of Charles II. These things, however, the Lord Lieutenant thought could be got over, but he warned the Government that the provision obliging Ireland to contribute to the Imperial expenditure must be managed with extreme delicacy, and might lead to the most violent resistance. No such stipulation had been annexed to the commercial concessions of 1779. The public revenue of Ireland was at this time at least 150,000*l.* a year less than the public charges, and therefore it was exceedingly unfit to bear an additional burden. Nor was this a time in which any unpopular proposal could be safely brought forward. 'The disappointment by Parliament of the popular expectations respecting a reform in the representation,

and their not granting protecting duties which the manufacturers of this city more particularly demanded, drove the people from their accustomed deference to the decisions of Parliament, and led them to look to other methods of accomplishing their ends by means of a congress and by non-importation agreements. The county candidates in general found themselves under the necessity of giving in to the popular cry, and the unsuccessful candidates joined in.' Abstractedly, the proposal of the Government seemed to the Lord Lieutenant perfectly just, but he feared that it would be so unpopular that even if it were carried through Parliament it would seriously unsettle the country and unite the factious elements. England should be content with the large military expenditure which Ireland cheerfully contributed to the Empire, and with the many indirect ways in which she benefited the richer country.[1] To insist upon a forced contribution would probably have the effect of diminishing the voluntary grants, and would therefore be of no service to the Empire, while constitutional objections of the most serious kind might be raised. This was the first instance of an attempt to

[1] The extreme Irish view of these advantages was thus stated by Flood: 'What nation would not protect Ireland without tribute, to whom Ireland were to give what she gives to Britain? She gives her the nomination of her monarch, and therein of her whole administration through every department; a third estate in her Legislature; the creation of her peerage; the influence over placemen and pensioners in the House of Commons; she gives her a mighty army; the use of near a million and a half of yearly revenue; five millions a year in imports and exports; above a million a year in absentee expenditure which, at the grievous issue of one million a year from Ireland, carries above two hundred thousand pounds a year in taxes into the British exchequer; she gives her the use of three millions of people in peace and war, and of seventeen millions of English acres in a happy climate and a happy soil, and so situated as to be the best friend or the worst enemy in the world to Britain.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 398, 399.

impose an obligatory contribution, and it would be a calamitous thing if it could be represented as bearing any resemblance to the policy which had proved so disastrous in America. Any stipulation which tended to make Ireland a tributary of England, which deprived the Irish Parliament of its exclusive control over Irish resources, which made it in any degree dependent on or inferior to the British Legislature, would strike the most sensitive chord in the Irish Parliament. 'If the surplus,' wrote Rutland, 'is in any way whatever to be remitted into England either in money or in goods, the resolution will never be carried.' If the Government insisted upon a contribution, the Lord Lieutenant hoped that it might be specified that it should be expended in Ireland; and it might be employed for the purpose of maintaining a portion of the British Navy devoted to the defence of the Irish coast.[1]

Pitt himself devoted some confidential letters to an explanation of the views of the Cabinet, and they appear to me eminently creditable both to his economical sagacity and to his honesty of purpose.[2] 'In the relation of Great Britain [with Ireland],' he wrote, 'there can subsist but two possible principles of connection, one, that which is exploded, of total subordination in Ireland and of restrictions on her commerce for the benefit of this country, which was by this means enabled to bear the whole burden of the Empire; the other, . . . that of an equal participation of all commercial advantages and some proportion of the charge of protecting the general interests.' 'The fundamental principle and the only one on which the whole plan can

[1] Rutland to Sydney, Jan. 13, 24, 25, 1785.

[2] The correspondence between Pitt and Rutland was privately printed by Lord Stanhope (then Lord Mahon) in 1842, and was published by the Duke of Rutland in 1890. The correspondence of the Irish Government with Sydney is in the Record Office.

be justified . . . is that for the future the two countries will be to the most essential purposes united. On this ground the wealth and prosperity of the whole is the object; from what local sources they arise is indifferent.' 'We open to Ireland the chance of a competition with ourselves on terms of more than equality, and we give her advantages which make it impossible she should ever have anything to fear from the jealousy or restrictive policy of this country in future.' We desire to make 'England and Ireland one country in effect, though for local concerns under distinct Legislatures, one in the communication of advantages, and, of course, in the participation of burdens.' 'In order to effect this we are departing from the policy of prohibiting duties so long established in this country. In doing so we are, perhaps, to encounter the prejudices of our manufacturing [interests] in every corner of the kingdom. We are admitting to this competition a country whose labour is cheap and whose resources are unexhausted; ourselves burdened with accumulated taxes which are felt in the price of every necessary of life, and, of course, enter into the cost of every article of manufacture. It is, indeed, stated on the other hand that Ireland has neither the skill, the industry, nor the capital of this country; but it is difficult to assign any good reason why she should not gradually, with such strong encouragement, imitate and rival us in both the former, and in both more rapidly from time, as she grows possessed of a larger capital, which, with all the temptations for it, may, perhaps, to some degree be transferred to her from hence, but which will, at all events, be increased if her commerce receives any extension.'

England, however, had a perfect right to make the opening of the plantation market an element in the question. The removal of restrictions which prevented Ireland from trading with foreign countries had been a

matter of justice; but the English plantations had been established under the sole direction of the English Parliament and Government; it was, therefore, by a mere act of favour that Ireland was suffered to trade directly with them;[1] it was proposed that she should have the additional advantage of supplying England through Ireland with their goods, and now that a final arrangement is made, now that 'the balance is to be struck and the account closed between the two countries, we must take full credit as well for what has been given by others . . . as for what we give ourselves.'

The indispensable condition to be insisted on, is that there should be 'some fixed mode of contribution on the part of Ireland, in proportion to her growing means, to the general defence;' that this contribution should not be left dependent upon the disposition and humour, the opinions and interests, that may from time to time prevail in the Irish Parliament, and that it should be under the complete control of the supreme Executive of the Empire. 'In Ireland it cannot escape consideration that this is a contribution not given beforehand for uncertain expectations, but which can only follow the actual possession and enjoyment of the benefits in return for which it is given. If Ireland does not grow richer and more populous, she will by this scheme contribute nothing. If she does grow richer by the participation of our trade, surely she ought to contribute, and the measure of that contribution cannot with equal justice be fixed in any other proportion. It can never be contended that the increase of the hereditary revenue ought to be left to Ireland as the means

[1] This had been stated by Lord North. See Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce*, iii. 647. Pitt does not urge in his letters, a point on which the ministry in Ireland dwelt largely—that the Act granting Ireland the plantation trade was revocable at pleasure, while the commercial treaty would secure it for ever.

of gradually diminishing her other taxes, unless it can be argued that the whole of what Ireland now pays is a greater burden, in proportion, than the whole of what is paid by this country. . . . It is to be remembered that the very increase supposed to arise in the hereditary revenue cannot arise without a similar increase in many articles of the additional taxes; consequently from that circumstance alone, though they part with the future increase of their hereditary revenue, their income will be upon the whole increased, without imposing any additional burdens. On the whole, therefore, if Ireland allows that she ought ever in time of peace to contribute at all, I can conceive no plausible objection to the particular mode proposed.'[1]

'The idea of Ireland contributing only for the support of her own immediate and separate benefit,' Sydney urged, 'is the direct reverse of the principle which ought to govern the present settlement, and utterly inadmissible.'[2] It was essential to the strength and unity of the Empire that some such contribution as was proposed should be made, and it was perfectly idle to suppose that without some such evident advantage to the Empire the British Parliament would consent to relinquish its trade monopolies. The most desirable arrangement, in the opinion of the Government, would be that the surplus of the Irish hereditary revenue should be applied to the reduction of the English national debt. But if, as might easily be expected, this very singular proposal proved unacceptable, the Cabinet insisted that the surplus must at least be set aside by the Irish Parliament to be applied to the naval forces of the Empire. There was no objection to giving a preference to Irish stores and manufactures for the use of the Navy, and if

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[1] Pitt to Rutland, Dec. 4, 1784; Jan. 6, March 1, 1785.

[2] Sydney to Rutland (most secret), Feb. 1, 1785.

it was absolutely impossible to carry the scheme in any other form, the required sum might be annually appropriated by, and the estimates annually laid before, the Irish Parliament.[1]

Pitt's plan was brought before the Irish Parliament on February 7, 1785, in the form of ten resolutions. Their most important provisions were that all foreign and colonial goods might pass from England to Ireland and from Ireland to England without any increase of duty, that all Irish goods might be imported into England and all English goods into Ireland either freely or at duties which were the same in each country, that where the duties in the two countries were now unequal they should be equalised by reducing the higher duty to the level of the lower, that except in a few carefully specified cases there should be no new duties on importation or bounties on exportation, that each country should give a preference in its markets to the goods of the other over the same goods imported from abroad, and that whenever the hereditary revenue exceeded a sum which was as yet not specified, the surplus 'should be appropriated towards the support of the naval forces of the Empire in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct.'[2]

These were the propositions now laid by Orde before the Irish Parliament, but it was soon found that one important modification of the plan was necessary. Grattan looked with much favour upon the general scheme, but he at first hesitated about the compulsory contribution. It assumed, to his mind, too much the appearance of a subsidy. It was indefinite in its amount and might rise with the prosperity of the country to a wholly inordinate sum, and he evidently agreed with Foster that as a matter of policy 'it would be better for Britain

[1] Sydney to Rutland (most secret), Feb. 1, 1785.
[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 116 125.

to leave the affair to the liberality and ability of the moment when our aid might be necessary.'[1] This objection, however, on reflection he was ready to waive, but he insisted strenuously that no additional contribution should be paid to the general defence of the Empire till the Government had consented to put an end to the ruinous system of annual deficits and almost annual loans which had already seriously injured the credit of the nation.[2] In order to meet this objection a new resolution was introduced, which made the contribution in time of peace contingent upon the establishment

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 236–239. See, too, *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 121.

[2] Rutland describes a conversation of Orde with Grattan. 'No argument could move him [Grattan] to consent to the appropriation of the surplus for the purposes of the Empire until Ireland should be free from all burthen of debt. Your lordship is not unacquainted with Mr. G.'s character, and experience has shown to what effect he can exercise his abilities when a strong ground of popularity is given him to stand upon.' After several conversations, 'Mr. Grattan remained obstinate in his opinion unless the expenses of government should be made equal to the revenue. He said he knew this to be the opinion of every intelligent and knowing man with whom he had communicated upon the subject . . . that he should state his opinion in Parliament with such arguments as he was convinced would render it impossible for any honest man, who pretended to the slightest regard to his country, to support the measure. . . . He thought the present system of carrying on government by accumulated loans was highly ruinous. . . . He conjured Mr. Orde to see the chief friends of Government, and know explicitly their opinion.' Orde, knowing that several of the most zealous friends of the Government thought ill of the policy of the measure, determined not to call them together, but having a meeting of some of the chief law officers in his apartment, he 'mentioned with a seeming carelessness that Mr. Grattan still continued his objection to the last resolution, when they one and all burst out with entreaties that the proposition might be revised, that some turn might be given to it to avoid the strong objection admitted by every one against bringing it in while the present income of the nation fell so much short of the expense.' Upon this opinion the Government determined to introduce an additional resolution. Rutland to Sydney (most secret), Feb. 12, 1785.

of a balance between revenue and expenditure. The hereditary revenue was now 652,000*l.* and was steadily rising. The new resolution provided that whatever surplus it produced 'above the sum of 656,000*l.* in each year of peace wherein the annual revenue shall equal the annual expense, and in each year of war without regard to such equality, should be appropriated towards the support of the naval force of the Empire in such manner as the Parliament of this kingdom shall direct.'[1]

Sydney, in a secret letter to Rutland, expressed his strong dislike to this concession to the views of Grattan,[2] but the English Government took no step to disavow their representatives in Ireland, and Rutland himself urgently maintained that the new condition was both necessary, politic, and just. 'The continued accumulation of debt and the providing for it by annual loans must be acknowledged to be a ruinous system. The extent to which these loans have already arrived in the last nine or ten years has sunk the value of Government four per cent. debentures, which were above par, to eighty-eight per cent. . . . 'When the nation, instead of applying the redundancy of its revenues to the discharge of its incumbrances, agrees to appropriate that redundancy to the general expenses of the Empire, it cannot be thought unjust that it should at the same time restrain the Government from running into debt.'[3]

Though the resolutions were vehemently opposed in the House of Commons by Flood and a few other members, and though there were a few hostile petitions from manufacturers who desired protecting duties and who saw that all chance of obtaining them was now likely to disappear, they encountered no serious or

[1] *Irish Parl Deb.* iv. 201.
[2] Sydney to Rutland, Feb. 24, 1785.
[3] Rutland to Sydney, Feb. 25 and March 4, 1785.

formidable difficulty, and at last passed through the Irish Parliament with a general concurrence. Grattan in a few words commended them as not only strengthening the Empire, but also securing the great end of a sound and honest financial administration, by interesting both the British and Irish Ministers in Irish economy. 'The plan,' he said, 'is open, fair, and just, and such as the British Minister can justify to both nations.'[1] One of the first consequences of the resolutions was a motion which was introduced by Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and carried by a large majority, imposing restrictions on the grants to manufactures, charities, and public works, which had hitherto been lavishly and often corruptly voted,[2] and the Parliament then imposed additional taxes estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year for the purpose of enabling Ireland to fulfil her part in the transaction, and showing that she had no desire to evade the obligation of a contribution.[3]

The popular portion of the House appears to have, with very few exceptions, fully concurred with the Government, and there was no sign of serious disturbance in the country. There was, undoubtedly, a party among the manufacturers who hated with a desperate hatred the notion of free trade; but it had little political power, and it would on the whole perhaps not be too much to say that economical opinion at this time was more enlightened in Ireland than in England. The manner in which new arguments are received often depends much less upon their intrinsic weight, than upon the disposition of the hearers, and circumstances had given English mercantile opinion a strong bias towards monopoly, and Irish opinion an almost equal

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* iv. 198. [2] Ibid. pp. 212, 218, 219.
[3] Ibid. v. 34-43.

bias towards free trade. The great, ancient, and wealthy industries of England, largely represented in the Imperial Parliament, fortified in all directions by laws of privilege, and commanding the markets of all the subordinate portions of the Empire, were very naturally marked out by their circumstances as the champions of monopoly, and their representatives regarded the advantages of the protective system as self-evident. The arguments of Hume and of Adam Smith appeared to them the mere subtleties of unpractical theorists, glaringly opposed to the dictates of common sense, and belonging to the same category as the speculations which denied the existence of matter, or of free will, or of a sense of right and wrong in man. The whole commercial history of Ireland, on the other hand, since the Restoration, had been a desperate struggle against commercial restrictions, and Irish thinkers were therefore prepared to welcome the new school of writers, who maintained that a policy of commercial restriction was universally and essentially unsound.

The resolutions passed to England, and were introduced by Pitt on February 22, in a speech of masterly power; but it soon appeared that they were destined to encounter a most formidable opposition. Fox and North at once denounced the propositions as ruinous to English commerce, and all over England the commercial classes were soon arrayed in the most violent opposition to the plan. Delegates of manufacturers from all England met in London, and, chiefly under the direction of the illustrious Wedgwood, they formed themselves into a permanent association called 'The Great Chamber of the Manufacturers of Great Britain,' for watching over their interests. Petitions poured in from every important manufacturing centre in England and Scotland. Liverpool led the way; a petition from

Lancashire bearing 80,000 signatures was laid on the floor of the House, and in a short time no less than sixty-two other petitions were presented. They alleged that the low taxes, and the low price of labour, in Ireland, would make anything like free trade ruinous to English manufacturers; that the English trader would be driven, not only out of the Irish, but even out of his own market; that the English manufacturer would be obliged in self-defence to transfer his works and capital to Ireland, and they clamorously demanded to be heard by counsel against the scheme.

Nearly twelve weeks were expended in hearing evidence against it, and during all that time the opposition in England was growing stronger and stronger. It was certain that the resolutions in their present form would not be carried, and when Pitt again brought forward the scheme in May 1785, the original eleven resolutions had expanded into twenty. Some of these related to patents, copyright of books, and the right of fishing on the British coast, and were open to little or no objection; but others modified the plan most seriously to the detriment of Ireland. Even after the expiration of the present charter of the East India Company, and as long as England thought fit to maintain any such company, Ireland was precluded from carrying on any direct trade with any part of the world, whether English or foreign, beyond the Cape of Good Hope to the Straits of Magellan, and from importing any goods of the growth, produce, or manufacture of India, except through Great Britain. She was prohibited from importing to England arrack, rum, foreign brandy, and strong waters, which did not come from the British West Indies. She was to be compelled to enact without delay, and without modification, all laws which either had been made, or which for the future should be made, by the British Parliament respecting

navigation, all existing and future British laws regulating and restraining the trade of the British colonies and plantations, and all laws either prohibiting or imposing duties upon goods and commodities imported from either the British or foreign colonies, Africa, or America. The same regulating power of the British Parliament was extended to all goods exported from Ireland to the British colonies of America and the West Indies, and even to a portion of the trade with the United States of America.[1] With very few exceptions the same laws and restrictions would apply to the English and Irish trade; but the circumstances of the two countries were so widely different, that it was easy to show that they would often be most unequal in their operation, and it was for the British Parliament alone

[1] Resolutions 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 16. Grattan thus stated the effect of these provisions: 'You give to the English, West as well as East, an eternal monopoly for their plantation produce, in the taxing and regulating of which you have no sort of deliberation or interference, and over which Great Britain has a complete supremacy. . . . There is scarcely an article of the British plantation that is not out of all proportion dearer than the same article is in any other part of the globe, nor any other article that is not produced elsewhere, for some of which articles you might establish a mart for your manufactures. . . . What, then, is this covenant? To take these articles from the British plantations and from none other, at the present high rates and taxes, and to take them at all times to come, subject to whatever further rates and taxes the Parliament of Great Britain shall enact.'—*Speeches*, i. 235. Flood, in a very remarkable passage, argued that the trade which was likely to be most beneficial to Ireland in the future was that with the United States, and that the commercial arrangement would completely destroy it. It 'subjects our imports from the independent States of America to such duties, regulations, and prohibitions as the British Parliament shall from time to time think fit to impose on Britain, as to all articles similar to those that are produced in the British colonies or settlements. Now what articles can America send to us, to which similar articles are not, or may not be, produced in some of the colonies or settlements of Britain?'—*Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 402, 403.

to determine the laws relating to navigation, to the trade with the English colonies, to the trade with the foreign plantations, and to part of the trade with the United States. On all these subjects the right of legislation was virtually transferred or abdicated, for the Irish Parliament would have no propounding, deliberative, negative, or legislative power, and would be obliged simply to register the enactments of the Parliament in England.

Even in their modified form the commercial resolutions were bitterly opposed by Fox, North, Burke, and Sheridan; and Eden, whose authority on commercial matters was very great, was on the same side. Burke, though he was by no means an unqualified opponent of the propositions,[1] described one part of them as a repetition of the English policy in America—a new attempt by the mother country, through the medium of Parliament, to raise a revenue by legislative regulations.[2] Fox and Sheridan declared that the resolutions went to the complete destruction of the commerce, manufacture, revenue, and mercantile strength of England, and they at the same time, while constituting themselves the especial champions of English commercial jealousy, did their utmost to excite Irish feeling against the scheme. They described it as a plan to make Ireland tributary to England, and as involving a complete surrender of the power of exclusive legislation, which Ireland so highly prized. It was, as Sheridan truly said, 'unquestionably a proposal on the part of the British Parliament, that Ireland should, upon certain conditions, surrender her now acknowledged right of external legislation, and return, as to that point, to the situation

[1] See a curious private letter which he wrote to Sir John Tydd, Grattan's *Life*, iii. 250–252.

[2] *Parl. Hist.* xxv. 647-651; Wraxall's *Post. Mems.* i. 320.

from which she had emancipated herself in 1782.' It bound Ireland, said Fox, to impose restraints 'undefined, unspecified, and uncertain, at the arbitrary demand of another State,' and Fox concluded his denunciation by a skilful sentence, which appealed at once to the jealousy of both countries. 'I will not,' he said, 'barter English commerce for Irish slavery; that is not the price I would pay, nor is this the thing I would purchase.'

Pitt exerted both his eloquence and his influence to the utmost, and at last, after a fierce debate which continued till past 8 A.M.,[1] the resolutions were carried by great majorities through the English Parliament. It would probably have been on the whole to the advantage of Ireland even now to have accepted them, but we can hardly, I think, blame the Irish Parliament for its reluctance to do so. Pitt, in endeavouring to make them acceptable to England, had been obliged to argue that the industrial ascendency of England was such that serious Irish competition was little short of an impossibility, while the opposition in England had loudly proclaimed that the project was completely subversive of Irish independence. The resolutions to which the Irish Parliament had agreed were returned to it in a wholly altered form, and all the more important alterations were expressly directed against Irish interests, and tended to establish the ascendency of the British Parliament over Irish navigation and commerce. The very essence of the Constitution of 1782 was that the Irish Parliament possessed an exclusive right to legislate for

[1] See the animated account of it in Wraxall's *Post. Mems.* i. 310–320. Wraxall states that on one, if not more, occasion, in the Wilkes discussions at the beginning of the reign, the House sat till 9 A.M. According to the *Parliamentary History*, however, the House adjourned at 6 A.M. in the great debate on the commercial propositions. The speech of Sheridan (*Parl. Hist.* XXV. 743–757) is probably the strongest statement of the case against the propositions.

Ireland commercially and externally, as well as internally, and it was this right which, three years after its establishment, Ireland was virtually asked in a great measure to surrender. The price, or at least a part of the price, which was asked for the commercial benefits that might be expected, was the relinquishment by Ireland of her full right of regulating her trade with foreign countries, and the restoration to the British Legislature of a large power of legislating for Ireland. It was said, indeed, that the new restrictions did not differ essentially, and in kind, from those under which Ireland had already accepted the trade to the English plantations, but it was answered that they at least differed enormously in the extent and uncertainty of the obligations imposed on future Irish legislation; in their interference with the rights of the Irish Parliament to regulate its foreign trade. It was said, too, that Ireland might at any time abandon the compact and regain her liberty; but once an intricate commercial system is established, it is often very difficult to withdraw from it, and as long as it continued, the hands of the Irish Parliament on many of the ordinary subjects of legislation would be completely tied. Grattan now denounced the scheme with fiery eloquence as fatal to that Irish Constitution which he valued even more than the British Empire.[1] Flood, once more, warmly co-operated with

[1] Rutland wrote of this speech to Pitt: 'The speech of Mr. Grattan was, I understand, a display of the most beautiful eloquence perhaps ever heard, but it was seditious and inflammatory to a degree hardly credible.'—Aug. 13, 1785. Woodfall, the parliamentary reporter, heard this debate, and made the report which is in the *Parl. Deb.* It was also published separately. He wrote to Eden: 'Grattan, whose conversion is in Dublin ascribed to Sheridan's speech (which I took such pains to procure for the public correctly), was admirable. His manner, as you well know, is most singular; but he said some of the finest things in the newest mode I ever heard.'—*Auckland Correspond-*

him. Several members on the Treasury Bench supported him. Petitions against the scheme flowed in from the great towns, and, after a debate which lasted continuously for more than seventeen hours and did not terminate till nine A.M., the House only granted leave to bring in a Bill based on the twenty resolutions, by 127 to 108.[1] Such a division at the first stage of the Bill, and in a House in which the Government usually commanded overwhelming majorities, was equivalent to a defeat; at the next meeting of Parliament, Orde announced his intention not to make any further progress with the Bill, and that night Dublin was illuminated in attestation of the popular joy.

The scheme for uniting the two countries by close commercial and military bonds thus signally failed, and it left a great deal of irritation and recrimination behind it. How, it was asked with much bitterness, can Ireland expect to be duly cared for in any treaty negotiation with Great Britain, when her only representatives in such a negotiation must be ministers appointed and instructed by the British Cabinet? The English Government appears to have acted with perfect honesty, and to have only modified its course under the pressure of overwhelming necessity, but its position in both countries was exceedingly embarrassing and somewhat humiliating. Orde, the Chief Secretary of Ireland, had brought forward the original propositions as the offer of the Government to Ireland. His supporters had represented them as certain to be carried in England, and on the strength of that assurance the Irish Parliament had voted 140,000*l.* a year of additional taxation. Yet the English Government had soon been obliged to discard

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ence, i. 79, 80. See, too, Hardy's *Life of Charlemont*, ii. 148, and the speech in Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 231–249.

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* v. 443.

that principle of equality which was the essence of the original resolutions, and had returned them to Ireland so amplified and altered as to be scarcely recognisable. On the other hand, Pitt by the most strenuous efforts, and in the face of a storm of denunciation and unpopularity, had carried his commercial scheme through the Parliament of England, only to find it rejected in Ireland.

It is worthy of notice that the words 'legislative union' were at this time frequently pronounced in connection with the commercial propositions. The free trade which they would have secured to Ireland had only been granted to Scotland on the condition of an union. Wilberforce in the English House of Commons, and Lord Lansdowne in the English House of Lords, spoke of a legislative union as the best relation for the two countries, but pronounced it to be impracticable, as Ireland would never consent. Lord Sackville, on the other hand, argued strongly in favour both of the practicability and expediency of such a measure, and of its great superiority to a commercial treaty. Sydney, when reporting this speech to Rutland, spoke of an union as impracticable, 'especially at a time when the Irish were but just in possession of their favourite object, an independent Legislature.'[1] It is certain, however, that Rutland had some time previously expressed a strong opinion in favour of a legislative union,[2] and it was noticed that shortly after the rejection of the

[1] Sydney to Rutland (secret and confidential), July 20, 1785.

[2] 'Were I to indulge a distant speculation, I should say that without a union Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain in twenty years longer.'—Rutland to Pitt, June 16, 1784. In a speech delivered in 1799, Bishop Watson mentioned that in 1785 he had pressed the advantages of an union on Rutland, who had answered that 'he wholly approved of the measure, but added, the man who should attempt to carry it into execution would be tarred and feathered.' *Parl. Hist.* xxxiv. 736.

commercial propositions several pamphlets discussing that question were published.

No positive evils, however, appear to have followed from the rejection of the commercial propositions. Ireland as a distinct country continued to legislate independently for her commerce, and her Parliament did not show the faintest disposition to interfere with English commercial interests. The commercial treaty which Pitt negotiated with France in 1786 included Ireland, and it was vehemently opposed by the Whig party in England; but the address approving it was carried in Ireland without a division, and the resolutions for making the necessary alterations in Irish duties passed without the smallest difficulty.[1] A new Irish Navigation Act proposed by the Government and adopting almost the whole of the English Navigation Act of Charles II. was soon after carried with equal facility.[2] A few years later some resolutions were moved resenting the exclusion of Ireland from the Asiatic trade, but nothing was done, and as far as commercial matters were concerned, England had certainly no reason to distrust or complain of the Irish Parliament. In 1790 applications were made by persons engaged in the leather trade in England, to limit by high duties the ex-

[1] 'The resolutions of the House of Commons [relating to the changes of duty] were severally agreed to with the almost unanimous concurrence of the House.' 'Mr. Grattan spoke shortly but strongly in favour of the treaty, and said that although Ireland should fail of the benefit she might expect from it, such a disappointment ought not to be imputed to any defect in the treaty, which in his opinion was fair and liberal, and opened a promising field upon which the country might exert her arts and industry.' Orde to Nepean, March 6, 1787 (private). 'The treaty of commerce between Great Britain and France is very popular in this country, and the attention paid therein to the interests of Ireland, is felt with a sensible gratitude by the whole nation.' Rutland to Sydney (private), May 31, 1787.

[2] 27 Geo. III. c. 23. Orde to Nepean, March 29, 1787.

port of bark from Great Britain to Ireland, in order to insure the ascendency on the Continent of the English leather trade over that of Ireland. Lord Westmorland, who was then Lord Lieutenant, remonstrated against this measure, and his letter to the English Government contains the following remarkable passage. 'Since the failure of the propositions for a commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland, no restraint or duty has been laid upon British produce or manufacture to prejudice the sale in this country, or to grasp at any advantage to articles of Irish manufacture, nor has any incumbrance, by duty or otherwise, been laid on materials of manufacture in the raw or middle state, upon their exportation to Great Britain. At the same time in everything wherein this country could concur in strengthening and securing the navigation and commerce of the Empire, the Government has found the greatest readiness and facility. The utmost harmony subsists in the commerce of the two kingdoms, and nothing has arisen to disturb it or give occasion for discontent.'[1]

The commercial propositions of 1785 form the first of the two great differences between the English and Irish Parliaments. In the interval between their rejection and the dispute about the Regency, only a few incidents occurred to which it is necessary to refer.

The scandalous state of the administration of justice in the metropolis has been already adverted to, and in 1786 a Police Bill was introduced and carried by the Government, for the purpose of remedying it. Dublin was divided into four districts. The watchmen, who had hitherto been under the control of the several parishes, were reorganised and placed under three new paid commissioners of the peace, who were nominated

[1] Westmorland to W. Grenville (private), Nov. 19, 1790.

by the Crown from among the Dublin magistrates, allowed to sit in Parliament, invested with large patronage and almost absolute power, and made practically responsible for the maintenance of order in the city. A new force of regular police—consisting, however, as yet, of only forty-four men—was created and placed under the commissioners. They were to see that the watchmen discharged their duties; they were also themselves to discharge ordinary police functions, and they had powers considerably beyond those of the old watchmen, of arresting suspicious persons and breaking into houses in search of criminals or stolen goods. Several rates were imposed for the purpose of supporting the new system, and there were many complicated police regulations of a less important character, which it is not necessary to describe.[1]

A somewhat similar scheme had shortly before been proposed for London, but it at once aroused opposition, and it had been dropped on account of a strongly adverse petition from the City.[2] The Government in England recommended the scheme as being almost equally needed in both capitals, but more easy to carry in Dublin than in London.[3] It speedily, however, aroused great opposition. Its opponents complained that it imposed a large additional expense upon the City; that it was essentially a patronage Bill intended to strengthen the power of the Government in the Corporation of Dublin, and to add to the very large number of places tenable by members of Parliament; that it violated the charter of the City by transferring the regulation of Dublin from the Lord Mayor and Corporation to the Crown; that it laid the foundation of a new semi-military force which might prove very dangerous to

[1] 26 Geo. III. c. 24.

[2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 367, 368, 370.

[3] Sydney to Rutland (most secret), Jan. 7, 1786.

liberty. The last argument when regarded in the light of modern experience will appear very futile, but apprehensions of this kind were long prevalent in England, and were often expressed in 1829, when Sir Robert Peel created a Metropolitan Police Force in London, placed under the control of two Government commissioners, and no longer dependent on parochial authority.

Grattan, while acknowledging that the old watchmen were thoroughly inefficient, and that a change in the machinery for enforcing the law was imperatively necessary, opposed strenuously the Government Bill. He believed that it was intended mainly to increase patronage, and that all the legitimate purposes of the measure could be attained without violating the charter or withdrawing its ancient privileges from the Corporation. It is difficult at this distance of time to pronounce with any confidence on the merits of the case. The dangers feared were no doubt exaggerated or chimerical, and the confidential correspondence of the Government seems to show that though they were not indifferent to the possibility of increasing their influence over the Dublin magistracy, they were at least animated by a genuine desire to repress lawlessness and crime.[1] It does not appear, however, that in this respect the police measure of 1786 had much effect. For a few months, it is true, there was some diminution of crime, but little more than a year had passed when petitions

[1] 'We have made a successful foundation, at least, to a scheme of effectual police in this capital, with some additions applicable to the country. We thought it right to begin with moderation, but we have established the principle, and obtained now, I trust, an influence in the magistracy of the city, which may be used to the most salutary purposes for the quiet and good order of the whole community. The opposition given to the Bill in the House of Commons has been chiefly confined to the extension of the influence of Government, and to the armed force with which they are to be entrusted.' Rutland to Sydney, March 31, 1786.

were presented by a great body of Dublin householders, asserting that the new police were as inefficient as the old watchmen, and that crime had fully regained its former level, while the expense of the police had trebled, and a great amount of purely corrupt expenditure had been incurred.[1]

The Whiteboy outrages, directed chiefly against tithes, but often taking the form of combinations for regulating the price of labour and lands, and the dues of the priesthood, raged fiercely during the later months of 1786 in several counties in the South of Ireland, and were accompanied by all the atrocities I have already described. At the end of January 1787, Fitzgibbon moved that further provisions by statute were indispensably necessary to prevent tumultuous risings and assemblies, and more effectually to punish persons guilty of outrage, riot, illegal combinations, and administering and taking unlawful oaths. Only a single dissentient voice was heard, and soon after, a very stringent Crimes Bill was carried through the House of Commons by 192 votes to 30. Grattan fully and emphatically admitted the necessity of fresh coercive legislation,[2] though he desired to introduce some slight

[1] See *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 248, 249, 340, 344. See, too, a very curious report by a parliamentary committee on the subject, in Plowden, append. lxxxii. The committee found, among other things, that the police charge for stationery in two and a half years was 3,316*l.* 6*s.* 6½*d.* Of this more than 150*l.* was said to have been paid for gilt paper, and 49*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* for sealing wax. The powers of the Corporation over the police were, as we shall see, for the most part restored in 1796. The wretched character of the Dublin police was noticed by Sir Richard Hoare in his *Tour in Ireland in* 1806, p. 300.

[2] 'The necessity of coercion was universally admitted, and Mr. Grattan, in particular, very strongly urged the principle as essential to the prosperity of the country. He and Mr. Brownlow were tellers for the majority, and the Bill was supported by great numbers of the independent country gentlemen, among whom was Mr. Conolly.'—Orde to Nepean, Feb. 19, 1787. See, too, Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 7, 8.

mitigations into the Government Bill, and would have gladly confined its operation to the counties in which the outrages were taking place. On this point, however, he did not insist, but he strongly opposed and ultimately obtained the withdrawal of a clause in Fitzgibbon's scheme, which would probably have converted the Whiteboy movement into a religious war. It provided that if it were established by the evidence of a single witness that an illegal oath had been tendered in, or adjoining to, a Popish chapel, that chapel should be at once destroyed, and its materials sold, and that if within the space of three years any new Catholic place of worship was erected in the same parish it also should be destroyed.[1]

The Act, as it was carried, made all persons who administered illegal oaths liable to transportation for life, and all who took them without compulsion, to transportation for seven years; it made most forms of Whiteboy outrage, including the unlawful seizure of arms, levying contributions by force and intimidation, and even publishing notices tending to produce riots or unlawful combinations, capital offences, and it introduced into Ireland the provisions of the English Riot Act. This part of the measure excited considerable debate, and although Grattan acknowledged its necessity,[2] it was much opposed by several members, and especially by Forbes. He read to the House the well-known passage in which Blackstone described the English Riot Act as a vast acquisition of force to the Crown, and he then enumerated the many English Acts passed since the Revolution to restrain undue influence—the Bill of Rights, the Act for excluding pensioners and placemen from the House of Commons, the Act for limiting the civil list, the Nullum Tempus

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 283–287. [2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 180, 227.

Act, the Acts for preventing revenue officers from voting at elections, for excluding contractors from the House of Commons, and for limiting the amount of the pension list. 'He observed that not one of those laws was to be found in the Irish statute book, and asked whether members could reconcile it with their duty to give this vast acquisition of force to the Crown, without enacting at the same time those laws which the wisdom of the Legislature of England had provided against its abuse and encroachments.'[1] The measure, however, at last passed with little dissent, though Fitzgibbon, at the suggestion of Grattan, consented to limit its operation to three years.[2]

The Whiteboy Act of 1787 is another of the many examples of the prompt and energetic manner in which the Irish Parliament never hesitated to deal with epidemics of outrage.. Fitzgibbon complained, however, that much of the evil was due to the supineness and sometimes even to the connivance of magistrates, and he alleged that they were prone on the slightest occasion to call for military assistance. An important Act 'for the better execution of the law' was carried in this year, for reforming the magistracy and establishing throughout the country a constabulary appointed by the grand juries but under the direction of peace officers appointed by the Crown.[3]

But while Grattan warmly supported the Government in measures for the suppression of disorder and crime, he maintained that it was equally imperative for the Parliament to deal with those great evils from which Irish crime principally sprang. The enormous absurdity, injustice, and inequality of the Irish tithe system has been explained in a former chapter,[4] and

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 210.
[2] 27 Geo. III. c. 15.
[3] Ibid. c. 40.
[4] See pp. 13-19.

tithes and the tithe proctor were the chief cause of the Whiteboy disturbances which were spreading every kind of evil and disaster over a great part of Ireland. Pitt with the instinct of a true statesman had expressed his wish, as early as 1786, that tithes in Ireland should be commuted into a money rate, levied on the tenants of the parish, regulated by the price of corn and calculated on an average of several years.[1] But although many of the poorer clergy would have gladly accepted such a plan, and although in the opinion of Rutland the majority of the laity 'were opposed to tithes, and strong advocates for some settlement,' the bishops 'considered any settlement as a direct attack on their most ancient rights and as a commencement of the ruin of the Establishment;'[2] and the Irish Government, discarding the advice of Pitt, obstinately resisted every attempt to modify the offensive system. Grattan had mastered the subject in its minutest details, and in 1787, in 1788, and in 1789 he brought it forward in speeches which were among the greatest he ever delivered, suggesting as alternative and slightly varying plans to pay the clergy a sum calculated on the average of several years and raised by applotment like other county charges; to institute a general modus in lieu of tithes; to make a commutation by a general survey of every county, allowing a specified sum for every acre in tillage, and making the whole county security for the clergymen. These plans were in principle very similar to the suggestion of Pitt, and in addition to their other advantages they might have made the collection of tithes by the resident clergy so simple and easy that the whole race of tithe farmers and proctors would have gradually disappeared. Grattan also proposed that lands which had been barren should for a certain

[1] Pitt to Rutland, Nov. 7, 1786. [2] Rutland to Pitt, Sept. 13, 1786.

time after their reclamation be exempt from tithes; that the partial or complete exemption of potatoes and linen, which existed in some parts of the kingdom, should be extended to the whole; and that a moderate tax should be imposed on the non-residence of the clergy.[1] The exemption of barren lands from tithes was approved of by Fitzgibbon,[2] and although it was for some years rejected on account of the opposition of the clergy, it was ultimately carried. But the other proposals of Grattan were met by an obstinate resistance. Fitzgibbon, and the majority which he led, refused even to grant a committee to investigate the subject, and the Irish tithe system continued to be the chief source of Irish crime till the Commutation Act of Lord John Russell in 1838.

The persistent refusal of the Irish Parliament to rectify or mitigate this class of abuses, appears to me the gravest of all the many reproaches that may be brought against it. Although about seven-eighths of the nation dissented from the established religion, the general principle of a Protestant establishment had as yet very few enemies; but the existing tithe system was detested both by the Catholics and the Protestant Dissenters, and it was exceedingly unpopular among the smaller landed gentry. Its inequalities and injustices were too glaring for any plausible defence, and the language of Pitt seems to show that England would have placed no obstacle in the way of redress. How possible it was to cure the evil without destroying the Establishment was abundantly shown by the Act of 1838. That Act, which commuted tithes into a land tax paid by the landlord with a deduction of twenty-five per cent. for the cost of collection, is probably the most successful remedial measure in all Irish history.

[1] Grattan's *Life*, iii. 317 335. [2] *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix. 435, xi. 344.

It proved a great benefit to the Protestant clergy, and it at the same time completely staunched an old source of disorder and crime, and effected a profound and immediate change in the feelings of men. Very few political measures have ever effected so much good without producing any countervailing evil. The Irish Church when it was supported by tithes was the most unpopular ecclesiastical establishment in Europe, and it kept the country in a condition verging on civil war. After the commutation of tithes nearly all active hostility to it disappeared. The Church question speedily became indifferent to the great mass of the people; the Protestant clergy were a beneficent and usually a popular element in Irish society, and the measure which finally disendowed them was much more due to the exigencies of English party politics than to any genuine pressure of Irish opinion. But no such measure as that of 1838 could be carried in the Irish Parliament, and in the last ten years of its existence even Grattan desisted from efforts which were manifestly hopeless. Yet at no time had the question been more important. Resistance to the exaction of tithes was year by year strengthening habits of outrage and lawless combination, and in the hope of abolishing the tithes the Irish Jacobins found the best means of acting upon the passions of the nation.

But whatever social or agrarian disturbances may have existed in the remoter counties, the political condition of Ireland in the closing period of the administration of Rutland presented an aspect of almost absolute calm. Prosperity was advancing with rapid strides. The credit of the nation was re-established. Both the young Viceroy and his beautiful Duchess were extremely popular. A gay, brilliant, and dissipated court drew men of many opinions within its circle or its influence, and political tension had almost wholly ceased.

Forbes, it is true, and the little group of independent members whom he represented, brought in motion after motion, condemning the increasing pension list, and the multiplication of places; but they were easily defeated in Parliament, and they were supported by no strong opinion beyond its walls. The distress which had formerly stimulated discontent was no longer acute. The fears of bankruptcy disappeared. Financial measures which will be hereafter related, lightened the burden of debt, and an extensive system of education was promised.

The confidential letters of Rutland and of his secretary in the latter period of the Administration, form a curious contrast to the anxious and agitated letters that issued from the Castle during the Administrations of Buckinghamshire, Carlisle, Portland, and Temple. Thus in February 1786, Rutland in a letter largely devoted to a description of the outrages of the Whiteboys in Munster says: 'The state of this country, as far as regards the proceedings of Parliament, affords a prospect highly promising and satisfactory. The most important money Bills have passed the Commons without any material opposition, and scarcely a troubled wave appears upon the political surface.'[1] A year later, when the Government introduced its very stringent coercive legislation for the suppression of the Whiteboys, the Parliament responded with an alacrity which at once surprised and delighted the Chief Secretary. 'We have succeeded wonderfully,' he wrote, 'in our first measure, of amending the laws against riot and unlawful combination. It would not have been supposed possible even three years ago to have obtained almost unanimity in the House of Commons to pass a Bill of coercion upon the groundwork of the English Riot Act. . . I am confident that this circumstance alone, as an in-

[1] Rutland to Sydney (secret and confidential), Feb. 27, 1786.

dication of the determination of the Legislature to strengthen the hands of Executive Government, will go far to quiet the disturbance throughout the kingdom.'[1] 'I am highly ambitious,' wrote Rutland, a few months later, 'to see this nation prosper under the auspices of my administration of the King's Government; to find it of weight in the general scale, and become a source of strength to the Empire. A Riot Act, an optional police to be applied when it may be adjudged necessary, an extensive and well-considered system of education, which, I trust, will be carried into execution in the ensuing session, together with the adoption of the British Navigation Act, are measures of no inconsiderable moment and importance to the general welfare. The country for the present is for the most part free from commotion, except in the county of Cork, where some slight indications of discontent appear, but even these are merely partial and local.'[2]

On October 24, 1787, a short fever, accelerated, it is said, by convivial habits, carried off the Duke of Rutland in the thirty-fourth year of his age, and terminated a viceroyalty which had been singularly prosperous. Lord Temple, who had now become Marquis of Buckingham, succeeded him, and arrived in Dublin in December. His short viceroyalty in 1783 had given him some Irish experience, and it was thought that the fact that his wife was a Catholic might give him some popularity. With considerable business talents, however, the new Lord Lieutenant was one of those men who in all the relations of life seldom fail to create

[1] Orde to Nepean, Feb. 24, 1787.

[2] Rutland to Sydney (private), May 31, 1787. A little later, after a journey in the North, he writes: 'Your lordship will receive much satisfaction in being informed of the loyal and tranquil state, in which I have found the once factious and disturbed province of Ulster.' Aug. 10, 1787.

friction and irritation. Great haughtiness, both of character and manner; extreme jealousy and proneness to take offence, had always characterised him; and before he had been many months in Ireland we find him threatening his resignation, bitterly offended with the King, angry and discontented with the ministers in England, and very unpopular in Dublin.[1] He instituted with commendable energy inquiries into peculations of clerks and other subaltern officers of the Government, and succeeded in detecting much petty fraud which had been long practised with impunity; but corruption in the higher forms of government showed no tendency to diminish. Salaries were increased. At least one obsolete office was speedily revived. The measures of economy that were introduced into Parliament were strenuously resisted, and the first session of Parliament was abruptly and prematurely shortened. An Irish pension of 1,700*l.* a year given to Orde, who had now retired from the office of Chief Secretary, and whose health was much broken, was attacked with reason as a violation of the assurance on the strength of which Parliament had consented a few years before to increase the salary of that office; and an appointment was soon after made which excited the strongest indignation.

I have mentioned the anxiety of all parties in Ireland to bring back to the country the great offices which were held by absentees. Rutland, shortly before his death, had tried to induce Pitt to make an arrangement for the restoration of the Vice-Treasurers to Ireland. It would, he said, be 'an object of great utility to his Majesty's Irish Government, both as a measure calculated to fasten on popularity, and at the same time as uniting the more solid advantage of creating new ob-

[1] See his letters in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, vol. i.

jects for ambition of the first men and the most extensive connections in this country.'[1] Pitt was unable or unwilling to consent, but shortly after the appointment of Buckingham the death of Rigby made it possible to bring back the important office of Master of the Rolls. The office, however, was coveted by William Grenville, the brother of the Lord Lieutenant, who was now President of the Board of Trade in England. His letters on the subject are curious, and far from edifying.[2] He found that part of the revenue which Rigby had received was derived from an illegal sale of places. He doubted whether the office could be legally granted for life, and whether the performance of certain duties might not be required, and for these and some other reasons he at last determined to relinquish it to the Duke of Leinster, but asked and obtained for himself the best Irish reversion—that of the office of Chief Remembrancer, which was held by Lord Clanbrassil.[3] An appointment so flagrantly improper completely discredited Buckingham at the outset of his administration, and it was well fitted to exasperate equally both the most selfish and the most disinterested of Irish politicians.

The unpopularity of the Lord Lieutenant was, however, chiefly personal, and confined to a small court or political circle. The country continued perfectly quiet. The alarm which was felt in the closing months of

[1] Rutland to Pitt, Sept. 13, 1786.

[2] They will be found in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 365–387.

[3] Parsons, who in 1788 was in violent opposition to Grattan, attempted to defend this job in Parliament on the ingenious ground that William Grenville was the English statesman to whom Ireland owed most, as it was he who had introduced the Renunciation Bill, and thus established the independence of the Irish Parliament, which Grattan had left precarious and unfinished. See *Irish Parl. Deb.* ix. 256.

1787, when the complications in Holland made war with France extremely probable, did not create the smallest disturbance. Recruiting was actively and successfully carried on, and the regiments on the establishment were raised to their full strength. Although combinations against tithes continued, and a measure granting compensation to defrauded clergymen was renewed, the new Secretary, Fitzherbert, was able to write that the commotion in the South had ceased.[1] The credit of the country had never been better, and the chief votes of supply passed without a division. Lord Lifford, who had been Irish Chancellor since 1767, wrote to Buckingham in August 1788, that he had never in his long experience known Ireland so quiet.[2]

It must be added that one other important question of patronage was pending. Lord Lifford was old and broken, and he desired to resign the seals. Although most of the judgeships were now given to Irishmen, no Irishman had yet been appointed Chancellor, but Fitzgibbon the Attorney-General strongly urged his claims. He went over to England to press them, but did not succeed in obtaining any promise from Pitt, and he appears to have somewhat irritated the not very patient Viceroy by his many letters on the subject.[3] The matter, however, was still unsettled when the great question of the Regency arose and suddenly changed the whole aspect of Irish politics.

This question, indeed, was well fitted to strain seriously the constitutional relations between the two countries. The King was incapacitated by madness. No provision had been made for carrying on the Go-

[1] Fitzherbert to Nepean, Jan. 30, 1788.

[2] Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 422.

[3] Ibid. pp. 424-426.

vernment, and it remained to reconstruct and to determine the first estate in the realm.[1] The event was one absolutely unprovided for by law. There was no real precedent to guide the decision. It was only possible to argue the question from the general principles of the Constitution and from very distant and imperfect analogies, and the real influences which shaped and guided the arguments of lawyers and statesmen were of a party nature. The King was warmly attached to his present ministers. The Prince of Wales was closely connected with the Whigs, and would probably transfer the reins of government to their hands.

I have elsewhere related at some length the discussions on the subject in England,[2] but in order to make the Irish aspects of this important question perfectly clear, I must now ask the reader to excuse some considerable repetition.

Two opposing theories confronted one another. Pitt maintained that during the lifetime of the King he and he only was on the throne; that as he was incapacitated by illness it devolved upon the other two branches of the Legislature to provide for the government of the country; that Parliament had a right to select the Regent, and to define and limit his powers, and that it should exercise this right in such a manner that the Sovereign on his recovery should find his power and patronage as little as possible impaired during his illness, and be able without difficulty to resume the full direction of affairs. Fox, on the other hand, maintained that the English monarchy being hereditary and

[1] I have already mentioned that in the Regency debates in England, as well as in Ireland, the King was uniformly spoken of as 'the first estate of the realm,' and I have, therefore, retained the language of the time, although it is not, strictly speaking, accurate.

[2] *History of England in the Eighteenth Century*, v. 387–441.

not elective, and the eldest son of the King being of age, he had a right to enter into the full exercise of the royal power during the incapacity of his father, but that the two Houses of Parliament as the organs of the nation were alone entitled to pronounce when the Prince ought to take upon him this power.

As it was ultimately admitted by Pitt that the moral claim of the Prince of Wales to exercise the office of Regent was overwhelming, and by Fox that he could not assume this office without the sanction and invitation of the two Houses of Parliament, the real difference on this point between the two rivals lay within narrow limits. Both parties, again, agreed that the Regent should have full right of changing the ministry and calling such statesmen as he pleased to the helm. Fox considered such a right to be inherent to his position; Pitt contended that it should be conferred on him by legislation; but both statesmen admitted that he should have it. The essential question at issue was the question of limitations. Fox maintained that the condition of the King gave the Prince of Wales the right of exercising while Regent the full royal power. Pitt, on the other hand, maintaining that the temporary exercise of royal authority was essentially different from the possession of the throne, contended that Parliament, while granting such powers as were necessary for this temporary administration, should leave the custody of the royal person and the appointment of the royal household in the hands of the Queen, and should strictly limit the power of the Regent to grant peerages, offices in reversion and pensions, and to dispose of the real and personal property of the King.

On this point there was one serious difficulty to be encountered by Pitt from which the theory of Fox was exempt. If the Prince had an inherent right to assume

the royal power in all its plenitude, it was a simple thing for the two Houses to carry an address inviting him to do so. But if limitations were to be imposed and a form of government was to be constructed, this could only be done by Act of Parliament, and no Act of Parliament could exist without the royal assent. Scott, however, who was then the chief law officer in England, devised a legal fiction for surmounting the difficulty. He maintained that a commission might be appointed by the two Houses for the purpose of keeping that Great Seal the impress of which was the formal expression of the King's assent; that this commission might be assumed to act as the representative and by the direction of the King, and that under this fictitious authority it might affix the Great Seal and give validity to the Regency Bill. Probably if no party motive had been aroused, and if Parliament had not determined in accordance with the general wishes of the people that it was desirable that the power of the Regent should be limited, such an expedient would have been rejected as equally ridiculous and illegal; but as there appeared to be no other way of limiting the Regency, the plan was adopted by large majorities in the British Parliament.

It is easy to see how perplexing the doctrine of Pitt must have been to the strenuous supporters of Irish parliamentary independence. Their fundamental doctrine was that the Crown alone was the link between the two countries, and that the British Parliament had no authority whatever over Ireland or the Irish Parliament; but they were now told that in consequence of the incapacity of the King, it was for the British Parliament to create the temporary sovereign whom they were to obey, and to define the powers which he was to exercise. The views of the independent party in Ireland naturally coincided with the doctrine of Fox as the one which was the most con-

sistent with their own Constitution, and several other motives acted in the same direction. The Administration of Lord Buckingham had become unpopular. The feeling of personal loyalty which was very strong in Ireland was shocked by the restrictions imposed by the English Minister on the heir to the crown. Some men were not insensible to the charm of asserting for Ireland the right to pursue a separate line of policy on a question of great constitutional importance, while many others thought they saw an approaching change in the source of patronage, and were eager to be among the first to win the favour of the coming ruler. It was generally believed that the King would be unable to resume the royal authority, and the chief borough interests, which had long been almost passive in the hands of the ministers, began to gravitate rapidly towards the new planet which seemed mounting above the horizon. The great interests of Shannon, Leinster, Tyrone, and Drogheda passed speedily into opposition and at once changed the balance of power; and the experience and debating power of Ponsonby and Hely Hutchinson were soon found on the same side.

It would be idle to suppose that the great mass of placemen and nominees who had so long been the docile servants of Administration were animated by any other than purely selfish motives; but no one who has studied the history of the time will attribute such motives to Grattan and Charlemont. The main reason for their conduct lies, I think, on the surface. The Whig doctrine of the Regency was, beyond all question, more in harmony with the Constitution of 1782 than the doctrine of the Government. There were, however, other considerations which influenced them. A strong political and personal sympathy had long attached them to the Whig leaders in England, and on the eve of the Regency debates, an assurance appears to have been

given to Grattan that in the event of a Regency the Government in Ireland would be changed, and that the new Government would accept and carry through some of those measures of reform which Grattan had so long unsuccessfully advocated as indispensably necessary to put an end to the reign of corruption in Ireland, and to make the Irish Parliament a real reflex of the educated opinion of the nation.[1]

The Irish Parliament was not sitting when the English Parliament began the discussions on the Regency question, and as the incapacity of the Sovereign caused much less embarrassment in Ireland than in England owing to the large powers possessed by the Lord Lieutenant, it was especially unfortunate that the unexpected prolongation of the debates in England, and the approaching expiration of some essential laws in Ireland, made it necessary to assemble the Irish Parliament before the question had been determined in England. At first the Lord Lieutenant believed that he could secure a large majority for the English plan, and that only a small section of the Irish Parliament wished to proceed by address.[2] But gradually his confidence diminished, and the week before Parliament met, the Chief Secretary wrote to the Government in a strain of great and evident mortification. 'The specific assurances of support,' he said, 'upon which alone I could

[1] See Grattan's *Life*, iii. 367, 372–375. After the conflict was over Lord Buckingham wrote: 'Your lordship will be surprised to hear that the engagements with the English opposition tended to a system of mischief, which I hope was not completely foreseen by those who framed this measure; for I do not hesitate to say that such a combination as had existed in this kingdom for the last three months, supported from Great Britain, under the circumstances of the present times and urging on the popular frenzy, would have completely overthrown every appearance of government in Ireland.' Buckingham to Sydney, March 23, 1789.

[2] Ibid. Nov. 23, 1788; Jan. 10, 1789.

form any opinion of the strength of the Government in Parliament, have in the course of the last three days been withdrawn in so many quarters where from every consideration I could least expect it, that I have very little hope to be able to stem on February 5 the address which will be moved by both Houses to his Royal Highness to take upon himself the Regency of this kingdom.'[1] When Parliament met, it was at once seen that the most important of the great interests in both Houses, many men who were in high employment under the Crown, and also the popular party directed by Grattan were resolved to act at once. A motion to postpone the question till the English Parliament had decided on the Regent was rejected by 128 to 74. The plan of proceeding by Bill, which was proposed by the Government, was rejected; and after a long debate, and chiefly under the guidance of Grattan, both Houses of Parliament agreed to address the Prince of Wales to take upon himself 'the government of this nation during the continuation of his Majesty's present indisposition, and no longer; and under the style and title of Prince Regent of Ireland, in the name and on the behalf of his Majesty, to exercise and administer, according to the laws and Constitution of this kingdom, all regal powers, jurisdiction, and prerogatives, to the Crown and Government thereof belonging.'

It is worthy of notice that in the Irish debates the question of limitations, which was so prominent in England, was thrown completely into the background. It was asserted by Grattan, and it was fully acknow-

[1] Fitzherbert to Nepean, Jan. 29, 1789. 'The union of most of the great connections in this kingdom has left me no hope of a majority on the Regency question, except those which are founded on the expectation that some of the independent and unconnected members in both Houses, who usually vote against Government, may in the present instance be induced to support it.'—Buckingham to Sydney, Jan. 29, 1789.

ledged on the part of the Government, that the restrictions which were necessary in England were immaterial in Ireland, and that there was no insuperable difficulty in the Regent exercising different degrees of power in the two countries.[1] The real question at issue was whether, under the peculiar circumstances of the Constitution of Ireland and the connection of the two crowns, the proper mode of investing the Prince of Wales with the Regency was by address or by Bill. Grattan and those who agreed with him in adopting the former alternative, argued, like the English Whigs, that it was impossible to legislate with only two estates of the realm, and that, therefore, the creation or recognition of a third estate was the indispensable precursor of every act of legislation. They treated the Commission appointed in England to guard the Great Seal and represent the royal person, as a pure phantom, and the Great Seal of England as of no importance except as authenticating and attesting the royal volition and assent. They urged that the British Parliament, in attempting to deal with the question in the way of legislation, and in inventing a fictitious royal assent, had been actuated by a desire to restrict the power of the Regent, and that this end was confessedly of no moment in Ireland.

[1] 'If you make the Prince of Wales your Regent and grant him the plenitude of power, in God's name let it be done by Bill; otherwise I see such danger that I deprecate the measure proposed. . . . I abominate the idea of restraining the Prince Regent in the power of making peers in this country, or in limiting him in the power of making grants on the narrow principles of suspicion and distrust. This is a question which rests upon very different ground in this country from that on which it has been taken up in England; and if gentlemen can reconcile to themselves a precedent for adopting in this country a different form of executive government from that established in England, I have not the smallest apprehension that the powers which may be committed to the Prince of Wales by the Parliament of Ireland will be abused by him.'—Speech of Fitzgibbon, *Irish Parl. Debates*, ix. 53, 54.

They acknowledged that the crowns of England and Ireland were indissolubly connected, but they utterly denied that an English Regent made by an English statute could have any authority in Ireland unless he was also made Regent by the Irish Parliament; and they accordingly contended that the proposed method of proceeding by a Bill which was to become an Act of Parliament by the assent of a Regent of Great Britain, elected by the British Parliament, and as yet unrecognised by the Irish Parliament, was directly opposed to the Constitution of 1782. Ireland was acknowledged to be independent of the British Parliament, and therefore, now that the supreme authority was eclipsed, the Irish Parliament, without reference to the proceedings, without waiting for the decision of the British Parliament, called upon the eldest son of the Sovereign, who had already declared his willingness to accept the Regency of Great Britain,[1] to assume the full power and prerogatives of the Crown in Ireland.

The address was copied from that of the two English Houses inviting William of Orange to take upon himself the conduct of affairs. 'There are points,' Grattan said, 'in which the Revolution bears a near resemblance to the present period, as there are others in which it is not only different but opposite. The throne being full, and the political power of the King existing, the power of the two Houses cannot be applied to that part of the monarchical condition; but the personal capacity of the King, or rather the personal exercise of the royal power, being deficient, the laws of the land not having in the ordinary course of law made provision for that deficiency, and one of the estates being incapable, it remains with the two others to administer the remedy by their own authority. The principle of

[1] See his answer to the Committees of the British Houses, Jan. 30, 1789.

your interference is established by the Revolution; the operation of that principle is limited by the contingency.' In this case there was, at least, no dispute about persons. The same person was acknowledged to be the one possible Regent in both countries, and that person was the heir to the throne.

It is remarkable, however, that Grattan carefully abstained from committing himself to the unpopular doctrine of Fox that the Prince of Wales, when of full age, had such an inherent right to the exercise of the royal power, that the function of Parliament in the matter was a function not of choice, but of adjudication. This doctrine was considered by the English Whigs, and, as it appears to me, with good reason, logically essential to their case. Grattan carefully avoided any distinct statement on the question of right. He spoke only of 'the irresistible claim' of the Prince. He based his argument for proceeding by address, on the ground that this is the natural method of proceeding when the third estate is incapable of acting, and that the supposed necessity of imposing restrictions on the Regency, which induced the British Parliament to adopt a different course, did not exist in Ireland. He never distinctly denied the validity of the proceedings of the British Parliament. He denied only that a Regency Bill which passed the two Irish Houses could become a valid Irish law by the assent of a Regent whose authority was based upon an English statute, and who was still unrecognised by the Irish Parliament. Curran and Hutchinson, indeed, strongly and ably supported the full doctrine of Fox, but much of the language of Grattan bore more resemblance to that of Pitt; and he seems to have thought it possible to take an intermediate position between the two parties in England. 'The method,' he said, 'whereby I propose these great assem-

blies shall supply this deficiency is—address. There are two ways of proceeding—one is by way of legislation, the other by address. When they proceed by way of legislation, it is on the supposition of a third estate in a capacity to act; but address is a mode exclusively their own, and complete without the interference of a third estate. It is that known parliamentary method by which the two Houses exercise those powers to which they are jointly competent. Therefore it is I submit to you the mode by address, as the most proper for supplying the present deficiency; and although the address shall on this occasion have all the force and operation of law, yet still that force and operation arise from the necessity of the case and are confined to it. . . . But as addresses of Parliament, though competent, in the event of such a deficiency, to create an efficient third estate, yet do not, and cannot with propriety, annex to their act the forms of law and stamp of legislation, it is thought advisable, after the acceptance of the Regency, that there should be an Act passed reciting the deficiency in the personal exercise of the royal power, and of his Royal Highness's acceptance of the Regency of this realm, at the instance and desire of the two Houses of the Irish Parliament; and further to declare and enact that he is and shall be Regent thereof during the continuance of his Majesty's present indisposition. The terms of the Act are to describe the powers of the Regent, and the power intended is the personal exercise of the full regal authority; and the reason why plenitude of the regal power is intended by the address, and afterwards by the Bill, is to be found in the nature of the prerogative, which was given not for the sake of the King but of the people. . . . We know of no political reason why the prerogatives in question should be destroyed, nor any personal reason why they should be suspended.'

Such were the arguments of Grattan. In opposition to them Fitzgibbon, in speeches of admirable subtlety and power, but now for the first time supported only by a small minority in Parliament, maintained the doctrine which had been accepted in England. A simple address of two Houses of Parliament could not possibly give the Prince of Wales the royal authority if he did not already by right possess it, and to assert that he did possess it was treason, for it was to assert that George III. was no longer on the throne. This argument was common to both countries, but there were others which applied especially to Ireland. The most powerful was derived from an Act which had been drawn up by Yelverton and carried in 1782, and which defined the manner in which the royal assent should be given in Ireland. The object of this Act was to put an end to the practice of altering Irish Bills in the Privy Council. It provided that all Irish Bills, after passing through the Irish Parliament, should be sent under the Great Seal of Ireland to England; that they should be returned without alteration to Ireland under the Great Seal of England, and that the Lord Lieutenant should be then empowered to give them the royal assent.[1] No Irish Bill, therefore, could become law without the Great Seal of England, but the Irish Parliament had no control whatever over that seal, and could, therefore, take no steps in appointing a Regent until the British Parliament had definitely decided in

[1] 21 & 22 Geo. III. c. 47. Another clause of the Act provided that no Parliament could be held in Ireland until a licence had been obtained from his Majesty under the Great Seal of Great Britain. It appears to me very doubtful whether the use of either seal in this transaction, meant more than a formal attestation of the genuineness of the documents that passed from country to country. See, however, on the importance of different seals in establishing ministerial responsibility, the remarks of Mr. Dicey, *The Law of the Constitution*, pp. 332 335.

whose hands that seal should be placed. No Regent appointed by the Irish Parliament could convert an Irish Bill into a law without this seal, which was for the present at the disposal of the British Parliament.

'Were the King of England and Ireland,' said Fitzgibbon, 'to come here in person and to reside, he could not pass a Bill without its being first certified to his Regent in England, who must return it under the Great Seal of that kingdom before his Majesty could even in person assent to it.' The Great Seal of England on Irish Bills is the bond of union and connection with England, and anyone who disputes its necessity, contradicts the direct letter of the law and weakens the essential security of the connection. Since the Constitution of 1782 the union of the supreme Executives of the two nations alone connects them, and whoever tampers with, impairs, or dissolves that union is preparing the way for separation. It is at least conceivable that the Prince of Wales might at the last moment decline the restricted Regency of England, and in that case the supreme executive powers of England and Ireland would be completely separated. 'It is a wise maxim,' said Fitzgibbon, 'for this country always to concur with the Parliament of Great Britain, unless for very strong reasons indeed we are obliged to differ from it. . . . Constituted as it is, the Government of this country never can go on unless we follow Great Britain implicitly in all regulations of Imperial policy. The independence of your Parliament is your freedom; your dependence on the Crown of England is your security for that freedom; and gentlemen who profess themselves this night advocates for the independence of the Irish Crown are advocates for its separation from England.' 'The only security of your liberty is your connection with Great Britain, and gentlemen who risk breaking the connection must

make up their minds to a union. God forbid that I should ever see that day; but if ever the day in which a separation shall be attempted may come, I shall not hesitate to embrace a union rather than a separation.' 'What, then, have we to do? As soon as we shall be certified that the Prince of Wales is invested with the authority of Regent in England, pass an Act to invest him with that authority in Ireland; send this Act to the Prince Regent in England; he will then have the command of the Great Seal of England, and will return our Act authenticated according to law. His Lord Lieutenant may then, by his command, give the royal assent to it; and who shall say that it is not a law of the land?'

Such, as fully as I can state them, were the leading arguments advanced upon each side of the controversy. It is my own opinion that the constitutional importance of the question, its danger, and its significance were all grossly exaggerated by party spirit at the time, and have been not a little magnified by succeeding historians. It appears evident that the case was so new and unprecedented that no course could possibly have been taken without straining or violating some part of the Constitution. It was an illegal thing for the Irish Parliament under any possible circumstances to deny the necessity of the Great Seal of England for the validity of Irish Acts, and for the Parliament of either country to assume that George III. was no longer on the throne; but it was an act of at least equal violence to create by parliamentary action a fictitious royal assent, to frame during the monarch's incapacity a new Constitution fundamentally different from hereditary monarchy, and to make the exercise of monarchical functions subject to election. In the words of a great lawyer, 'the phantom of a commission issued by an incapable King, to confer upon what the other branches of the Legisla-

ture had proposed, the outward semblance of a statute passed by all the three, was an outrage upon all constitutional principle, and, indeed, upon the common sense of mankind, yet more extravagant than the elective nature of the whole process.'[1] The doctrine of Scott that the Great Seal makes the assent of the Crown complete in law, though the Sovereign may be incapable of giving any warrant for affixing it, was certainly far more inconsistent with the principles of monarchy than the doctrine of Grattan, that the essence of the consent of the Crown is the volition of the Sovereign, and that the Great Seal has no value except as attesting and authenticating it. The former doctrine might be extended not only to an infant or lunatic king, but to a king who was a prisoner in the hands of rebels. It virtually substituted a seal for a monarch, and it reduced the place of royalty in the Constitution to complete insignificance.

But if, putting aside the metaphysics of the Constitution, we judge the question on the grounds of political expediency, I cannot see that any real evil would have ensued if the Irish Parliament, under the very exceptional and embarrassing circumstances of the case, had delayed its proceedings till the English Parliament had finally and irrevocably determined the Regency of England. Such a course would probably

[1] Brougham's *Statesmen of George III.: Lord Loughborough.* Another great legal authority writes: 'After the consideration I have repeatedly given to the subject I must ever think that the Irish Parliament proceeded more constitutionally, by considering that the heir apparent was entitled to exercise the royal authority during the King's incapacity as upon a demise of the Crown, and by presenting an address to him praying him to do so, instead of arrogating to themselves, in Polish fashion, the power of electing the supreme magistrate of the Republic, and resorting to the palpable lie, of the proceeding being sanctioned by the afflicted Sovereign.' Lord Campbell's *Lives of the Chancellors*, ix. 185.

have averted all serious difference between the two countries, prevented all danger of a separation of the Executives, and destroyed the force of nearly all the arguments which were directed against the Irish proceedings. The conduct of Grattan and Charlemont on this question appears to me to have shown an exaggerated sensitiveness about the Constitution, and an exaggerated jealousy of the British Parliament; and the feverish impatience with which Grattan pushed on the question, and insisted on the Irish Parliament committing itself before the British Parliament had completed its proceedings, seems to me the greatest political error of his life. It is always a dangerous thing in politics to push to its extreme limits logical reasoning drawn from the first principles of the Constitution, and it was truly said by Fox that a habit of speculating upon political systems was one of the great vices of Irish political thought. Much might be plausibly said in favour of the right of independent agency and option of the Irish Parliament on this important question, and on the principle of constitutional superiority which the Government plan would have recognised in the British Parliament; but it is probable that the wisest English statesmen, if they had been placed in the situation of Grattan, would have accepted some constitutional anomaly, rather than incur the great practical inconvenience of differing from England on an important Imperial question, and would have contented themselves with guarding by express resolutions against any dangerous inference that might be drawn from their act.

At the same time, while disagreeing from the course adopted by the Irish leaders, I am entirely unable to concur with those who have represented the action of the Irish Parliament as seriously endangering the connection. It is quite certain that none of the leading

actors in Ireland were disloyal to that connection, and it appears to me to be absurd to suppose that a measure investing the acknowledged heir of the British throne with regal power in Ireland during the incapacity of his father, should have tended to produce a permanent separation of the two countries. It was constantly repeated that under the Constitution of 1782 the hereditary monarchy was the sole bond of union, but in the difference between the two Parliaments it was the Irish Parliament which most exalted the principle of heredity, which was most anxious to preserve the executive power unimpaired in its prerogatives, and which formed the most modest estimate of the capacity of Parliament. It was morally certain that the same Regent would preside over both countries, though with slightly different powers. It is probable that if the Regency had continued, a change of ministers would in both countries have soon placed the executive and legislative powers in harmony. In the worst case, either the death or the recovery of the King, or a turn in his illness which made his recovery hopeless, would have replaced the two nations in their former relation, and an express enactment might then have been easily made preventing the possible recurrence of a difficulty which was serious only because it was unprovided for by law.

The difference, however, was for a short time very acute. The address of Parliament to the Prince of Wales was presented to the Lord Lieutenant for transmission, but Buckingham refused to lay before the Prince a document 'purporting to invest his Royal Highness with the power to take upon him the government of this realm before he should be enabled by law to do so,' and the Government in England strongly approved of the decision. They maintained, in the words of Sydney, 'that his Royal Highness cannot lawfully take upon him the administration of any part of

the King's authority or the government of any of his Majesty's dominions till he is enabled by an Act of Parliament so to do, and that no Act of the Irish Parliament for that or any other purpose can be passed except by the royal assent, given to it under the Great Seal of Great Britain; . . . that the importance of this principle is the more manifest in this particular case, as the violation of it has an evident tendency to dissolve the constitutional union of the Executive Government of the two kingdoms.'[1] Both Houses, however, passed votes of censure on the Lord Lieutenant. In order to secure that Parliament should be sitting during the continuation of the case, the chief supplies were only granted for two months, and the two Houses appointed six commissioners, including the Duke of Leinster and Lord Charlemont, to present the address. They went to England and discharged their task, but at this critical moment the recovery of the King put an end to the question that was pending. 'I cannot attempt to describe to your lordship,' wrote Buckingham, 'the transport with which this communication has been received by all ranks of people, and, indeed, I should not do justice to the loyalty of this kingdom if I did not assure your lordship that they are truly grateful.' He speaks, however, bitterly of the opposition he had found from some of the great families, and adds significantly that 'such a combination ought to be broken,' that 'the aristocracy, which was broken under his Majesty's direction by Lord Townshend, will be again broken if it should be deemed necessary.'[2]

The episode was terminated. Most of the placemen and pensioners who had at first associated themselves

[1] Sydney to Buckingham, Feb. 21, 1789.

[2] Buckingham to Sydney, Feb. 26, 1789.

in a bond against the Government, consented on a promise of amnesty to resume their places. Several, however, holding places valued at nearly 20,000*l.* a year were dismissed, and among the number were the Duke of Leinster and Ponsonby.[1] Corruption of the most wholesale description was again resorted to. Seven peers were created; nine others were promoted; several baronets were made; 13,000*l.* a year more was expended in pensions, and a crowd of new and often sinecure places were created. In a speech in the February of 1790, Grattan stated in Parliament that in the course of less than twelve months fourteen new parliamentary places and eight or nine parliamentary pensions had been created.[2] In the twenty years preceding 1790, the number of revived or new places and salaries created and held by members of Parliament was not less than forty, and in the House of Commons of 1790 no less than 108 members were either placemen or pensioners.[3]

Lord Lifford, who had continued, at the wish of the Government, to hold the seals,[4] sent in his resignation, and died a few days later, and Fitzgibbon was rewarded for his recent services by the Chancellorship. He obtained it in spite of the opposition of Thurlow, who insisted that the post should still be reserved for Englishmen, and he was at once raised to the peerage as Baron Fitzgibbon. He was barely forty, but his great abilities both as lawyer and politi-

[1] See the list in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 389, 390. Lord Shannon was one of those who signed a paper assuring the Lord Lieutenant 'that they did not wish to oppose his Majesty's Government,' and who accepted the amnesty, but his wife (who was the sister of Ponsonby) overwhelmed him with such reproaches that he at last told Buckingham that 'he could not give up his domestic peace, and must stand the die which he had cast,' and he was accordingly deprived of his Vice-Treasurership. Buckingham to Grenville, March 31, April 3, 1789. *Dropmore MSS.*

[2] Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 243.

[3] Plowden, ii. 302.

[4] See Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, i. 426

cian fully justified the appointment, and except where his furious personal antipathies and his ungovernable arrogance were called into action, he appears to have been an able, upright, and energetic judge. Buckingham warmly recommended him, describing him as an eminently 'honourable and valuable servant of the Crown,' whose 'parliamentary and legal careers have been marked by the most earnest and scrupulous attachment to the laws and practices of Great Britain both in Parliament and at the bar,' and by a wish to maintain that 'subordination to her Government and councils which are essential to the existence of Ireland.' 'The death of his eldest brother,' he continues, 'put him in the possession of a very large and affluent property, but he did not quit his profession,' and recalling the services of Fitzgibbon on the Regency question, the Viceroy expressed his belief that no Englishman would have ventured to take the part he did, and that as Chancellor, if such questions were renewed, he could do much more than an Englishman in the same position.[1] His influence was steadily employed in opposition to constitutional concession, and everything that could restrict corruption in the Irish Parliament was opposed. A place and pension Bill, and a Bill disfranchising revenue officers, were introduced and easily defeated, and all inquiries were refused that could lead to a detection of corruption.

Such were the last proceedings in the Irish Parliament, before the French Revolution burst upon Europe; and when we remember that the obstinate resistance to all attempts to reform and purify the House of Commons

[1] Buckingham to Sydney, April 14, 1789. There are several letters on the subject in Buckingham's *Courts and Cabinets*, vol. ii. A curious letter of Thurlow to Fitzgibbon on his appointment, will be found in O'Flanagan's *Lives of the Irish Chancellors*, ii. 201, 202.

was coupled with an equally obstinate resistance to all attempts to modify the enormous grievance and injustice of the tithe system, which pressed so heavily on the poor, it is easy to realise the fierce elements of combustion that were accumulating. Buckingham, however, did not remain to meet the storm. His health was broken, and every vestige of popularity had gone. In April Fitzherbert resigned, and at the end of September Buckingham followed his example. On January 5, 1790, Lord Westmorland arrived in Dublin to succeed him.

One of the consequences of the conflict between the two Parliaments on the Regency question, and of the very exaggerated language that was used about the danger to the connection, was that Irish affairs now began to attract the serious attention of the French Government. Luzerne, the French ambassador in London, wrote two despatches in February 1789, in which he briefly mentioned the conflict and the growing reports that Ireland was tending more and more to separation from England, but expressed his own belief that such ideas can only have been adopted by a few wild enthusiasts, for Ireland was too weak to stand alone and was bound to England by irresistible commercial interests. A month later, however, the question seemed to him more serious, and he wrote a long and interesting despatch to his Government, relating in detail the Irish proceedings about the Regency. The conduct of the Irish Parliament seemed to him very unconstitutional. The claim it advanced went much beyond any it had before put forward, and tended directly to sunder the two Governments and crowns. It was greatly due to the personal unpopularity of the Lord Lieutenant, who had shown himself at once haughty, harsh, and parsimonious, and in the bestowal of his patronage extremely corrupt. It was also, he

thought, partly due to the fact 'that among the principal personages of that kingdom there is a very strong party which has always contemplated a separation sooner or later of Ireland from Great Britain.' 'This state of things,' he said, 'assuredly deserves our attention, and although Ireland is, in my opinion, still far from separating from England, such an event may be foreseen, and it ought not to come upon us by surprise.' He therefore strongly urged the French Foreign Office to send over a secret agent, and he designated the man who appeared to him most fitted for the task.

There was now in England an American merchant named Dr. Bancroft, a man of strong scientific tastes and an old and intimate friend of Franklin. In 1779, when there was a general belief in France, that Ireland was about to follow the example of America, and that an Irish insurrection might assist France in her war, this man had been sent over by Vergennes on a secret mission. He had carefully studied the condition of Ireland on the spot, and he had come to the conclusion that, though there were decided principles of independence among the Irish, they had no settled plan and were much divided, and that nothing could be expected from insurrection. It was the report of Bancroft, corroborated by other information, that decided Vergennes to have no further dealings with disaffected Irishmen. Bancroft had recently returned to England, where he had many friends and was much respected, and he was on very intimate terms with Lord Camden. Luzerne had the highest opinion of his judgment and integrity. He believed him to be fitted beyond all other men to ascertain for the French Government what changes had taken place during the last ten years in Irish affairs, and he knew that he was ready to undertake the mission.

The reply of the French Minister was very cautious.

'I agree with you, sir,' he wrote, 'that the fermentation in Ireland may have serious consequences, and that whatever course the ministry adopts, it is not likely to appease it; but I think at the same time that matters are not ripe for a mission, and that we must not in any way co-operate. Our secret would be assuredly discovered, and war would be the inevitable consequence of the slightest indiscretion. Moreover, sir, I have reason to believe that the hatred of the Irish for France is much stronger than their aversion to the English Government. This at least was the conclusion arrived at by Dr. Bancroft in the report which he drew up.' At the same time, the minister added, circumstances may have changed, and it will certainly be useful to France to know the real dispositions of the Irish. The proposition of Luzerne was therefore accepted. He was authorised to send over Bancroft to Ireland, furnishing him with money and with verbal instructions, and to obtain from him on his return a detailed report; but he must be careful in no way to commit the Government to any line of action, and he was to take the utmost precaution that the affair should not be known.

This was probably the first step of a series of French dealings with Ireland, which a few years later assumed a grave importance. 'Perhaps,' wrote Luzerne, 'the condition of Ireland is the only great obstacle the ministry is about to encounter in its views of ambition, and in the intrigues which it is designing on the Continent.'[1]

The period of history which has been recounted in this chapter, though in many ways chequered, was on the whole one of great and growing prosperity. From the time when commercial liberty was restored, till the outburst of the rebellion of 1798, we have decisive evi-

[1] See the letters of Luzerne, Feb. 12, 16, March 28, 31, April 1, and the reply from the French Minister, April 6, 1789. French Foreign Office.

dence that the material condition of Ireland was steadily improving, though she still ranked far behind England in capital, industrial skill, and industrial habits. One of the most important evidences that can be adduced of the character of a Government and of the true condition of a country, is to be found in the state of its public credit, and a careful examination of that of Ireland will furnish some conclusions which may, I think, be surprising to the reader. Shortly after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 the whole of the small debt which Ireland had incurred had been liquidated, but the Seven Years' War and the War of the American Revolution had created a new debt, and for some years after the last peace there were annual deficits. In January 1786 the Accountant-General observed that since the year 1760 the Irish national debt had increased from 223,000*l.* to 2,181,501*l.*, but he added as a palliation, 'that two very expensive companions had gone hand in hand with that debt—premiums and parliamentary grants, which amounted in the said number of years to 2,700,000*l.*'[1] We have seen the strenuous efforts made by Grattan to put an end to the annual deficits; the resolution introduced at his desire into the commercial propositions for that purpose, and the additional duties that were imposed in 1785 and were estimated to produce 140,000*l.* a year. This measure proved on the whole[2] efficacious in restoring the equilibrium, and until the great French war broke out, followed soon after by virulent disaffection and by a great rebellion in Ireland, Irish finances appear to have been thoroughly sound. Foster, who was by far the ablest finance minister Ireland has ever possessed, observed in one of his speeches

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 102. On the earlier history of the debt the reader may find some interesting facts in the same work, i. 39, 136 153.

[2] See, however, Grattan's *Speeches*, ii. 237-243.

on the Union that in 1785, when the new taxes were imposed, the national debt was 2,381,501*l.* In 1793 at the end of the peace it was only 2,344,314*l.*[1]

This fact, however, alone is not decisive. We have seen how lamentable the poverty of Ireland had been in early periods when the debt was very small. A nation may have no debt because it is unable to borrow, or it may restore the equilibrium of its finances by taxation which is ruinous to its prosperity. Nothing, however, is more certain than that for many years after the imposition of the new taxation, Irish wealth was rapidly augmenting. At the end of the session of 1787 Foster, who was then Speaker, when presenting the money bills to the Lord Lieutenant for the royal assent, said 'the wisdom of the principle which the Commons have established and persevered in under your grace's auspices, of preventing the further accumulation of national debt, is now powerfully felt throughout the kingdom in its many beneficial consequences. Public credit has gradually risen to a height unknown for many years. Agriculture has brought in new supplies of wealth, and the merchants and manufacturers are each encouraged to extend their efforts, by the security it has given them that no new taxes will obstruct the progress of their works or impede the success of their speculations.' He added, however, some remarkable words referring to the stringent Whiteboy legislation of that year, which characterise truly the spirit in which at that time Irish affairs were administered. 'Happy as our situation is, we know that all its blessings will be a vain expectation, if a spirit of outrage and opposition to the law shall prevent internal industry, and depreciate the national character. We have therefore applied ourselves to form such laws as must, under the

[1] See his speech in February 1800.

firmness and the justice of your grace's Government, effectually and speedily suppress that lawless spirit.'[1]

I have quoted already, the letter of Rutland in March 1785, in which he complained that the result of nine or ten years of deficits had been that the Government 4 per cent. debentures, which had once been above par, had sunk to 88 per cent.[2] Immediately after the imposition of the new taxes, however, they rose, and in the beginning of 1787 Rutland was able to send over to Sydney a plan which he had accepted, for replacing 4 per cent. debentures of 200,000*l.* by debentures of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; and Treasury bills for 100,000*l.* bearing an interest of 3*d.* per 100*l.* a day, by others bearing interest of $2\frac{1}{2}d.$, 'a pleasing proof,' as he justly said, 'of the credit in which the funds of this country at present stand.'[3] A year later, under the Administration of Buckingham, and in spite of a considerable addition to the military forces, a similar process of reduction was extended to the whole of the remaining debt. 'The Lord Lieutenant,' wrote the Chief Secretary on this occasion, 'enjoys particular pleasure in reflecting that the state of public credit in Ireland is such that Government, while it attains an increase of effective force to Great Britain, can in the same instant bring forward a plan for the reduction of the interest upon the whole of the national debt.'[4]

These two reductions were not, it is true, carried out without a certain premium which was raised in the form of lotteries,[5] but the real price of the Government loans was stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 373, 374. See also his speech at the end of the following session, viii. 419.

[2] Rutland to Sydney, March 4, 1785.

[3] Feb. 13, 1787, Rutland to Sydney.

[4] Feb. 2, 1788, Fitzherbert to Nepean.

[5] 28 Geo. III. c. 2. See, too, a speech of Fitzgibbon, *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 313.

be 3*l.* 18*s.* per cent.;[1] and speaking in 1788, at a time when the financial prosperity of the ministry of Pitt was at its height, he was able to declare that 'the public funds in this country have been higher here these several years past than what they are in England.'[2] We have seen that about this time Pitt was looking forward confidently to the rapid diminution and not very distant extinction of the English National Debt. In Ireland the prevailing spirit was not less sanguine, and the best financiers connected with the Government avowed their belief that the finances of Ireland were now so satisfactorily established, that Ireland was never again likely to increase her debt.[3]

The financial debates of this year are singularly instructive, both on account of the rare amount of knowledge and ability they display, and on account of the many incidental lights they throw on the condition of the country. In Ireland as in England, and indeed in all, or almost all, European countries except Holland, the rate of interest was settled by law, and the rate in Ireland was six per cent. while in England it was only five. The Irish rate of interest had been reduced in 1703 from ten to eight, in 1721 to seven, and in 1731 to six per cent., and it was now assimilated to the English rate. It was mentioned in the course of the debate that first-class mortgages on land could be had in England for four and a half per cent.; in Ireland for five per cent.

As early as 1768 the necessity for increased intercourse with England was recognised by the establishment of three additional packet boats between Holyhead and Dublin, thus securing six weekly mails between England and Ireland.[4] Travellers who visited

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 294, 295.
[2] Ibid. p. 288.
[3] Ibid. pp. 289, 290, 295, 321.
[4] *Annual Register*, 1768, p. 85.

Dublin towards 1780 remarked that a penny post had recently been established in the city; that new houses and public buildings were everywhere arising; that more than twenty stage coaches connected the metropolis with distant parts of Ireland.[1] 'The roads,' said one traveller, 'are almost invariably excellent. The inns are furnished with every accommodation that a traveller not too fastidious can require. . . . Travelling is perfectly secure. . . . Footpads, robberies, and highwaymen are seldom heard of except in the vicinity of Dublin.'[2] The splendour of the capital was indeed out of all proportion to the wealth of the country;[3] but it at the same time indicated clearly an increasing industrial activity. The old Custom House became so inadequate for the business which passed through it, that in 1781 the foundation was laid of a new Custom House of great architectural beauty, which was opened ten years later. In 1782, under the administration of Lord Carlisle, a National Bank with a capital of one million and a half was established in Dublin. A General Post Office, the Irish Academy, a College of Physicians, and a College of Surgeons speedily followed, and men of all parties and opinions recognised the rapid strides of national prosperity. Arthur Young, indeed, as early as 1778 maintained, in opposition to the best Irish

[1] Luckombe's *Tour in Ireland*, 1780; Twiss, *Tour in Ireland*, 1785.

[2] Twiss's *Tour*, pp. 117–119.

[3] Woodfall writes from Dublin in 1785: 'You who were here so lately would scarcely know this city, so much is it improved, so rapidly is it continuing to improve. After the talk of the misery of the people in our Parliament, and in the Parliament here, I cannot but feel daily astonishment at the nobleness of the new buildings and the spacious improvements hourly making in the streets. I am sometimes tempted to suspect appearances, and to think I am at table with a man who gives me Burgundy, but whose attendant is a bailiff disguised in livery. In a word there never was so splendid a metropolis for so poor a country.'—*Auckland Correspondence*, i. 84, 85.

opinion, that the country was even then in a progressive state, and had been steadily improving since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748;[1] but after the concession of free trade the signs of advance were far more certain and unequivocal. In 1785 Lord Sheffield, in his well-known treatise on Irish trade, asserted that 'perhaps the improvement of Ireland is as rapid as any country ever experienced,' and that 'the kingdom in general is in the most prosperous state.'[2] In the debates on Orde's propositions Ireland was constantly, though no doubt very untruly, represented in England, as likely to become a most serious commercial rival.[3] In 1790 Sir John Parnell, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in Parliament that 'it was his pride and his happiness to declare that he did not think it possible for any nation to have improved more in her circumstances since 1784 . . . than Ireland had done; from that time the debt of the nation had decreased 96,000*l.*, and the interest on the debt still remaining had decreased 17,000*l.* per annum, which was precisely the same thing at four per cent. as if the principal had been reduced 425,000*l.* more. Add to this the great increase of trade, our exports alone having increased 800,000*l.* last year beyond the former period; and he believed it would be difficult in the history of the world to show a nation rising faster in prosperity.[4]

In 1793 Crumpe published that remarkable 'Essay on the best Means of providing Employment for the People,' which is one of the most faithful, and at the same time most unflattering, pictures of the social and

[1] *Tour in Ireland*, ii. 332, 333.

[2] *Observations on the Trade of Ireland*, pp. 6, 352.

[3] There are some striking essays on the condition of Ireland as it appeared at this time to intelligent Englishmen, in an English periodical, published in 1785, called *The Political Herald and Review*.

[4] *Irish Parl. Deb.* x. 155.

industrial condition of Ireland. But while tracing with an unsparing hand the great industrial failings of the people, he adds that 'the defects which have been noticed are daily diminishing. The middling ranks are becoming more attentive to their debts and less indulgent to their extravagance. A spirit of industry is infusing its regenerating vigour among them; the vain and ridiculous aversion to the pursuits of commerce or other industrious occupations is wearing out, and the encouragement of agriculture more generally attended to. The lower classes are becoming more industrious, more wealthy, more independent. . . . The situation of the peasant has since the final pacification of the kingdom, but more especially since the settlement of its Constitution in 1782, been daily improving.'[1] 'I am bold to say,' said Lord Clare, speaking of the preceding twenty years, in the remarkable speech which he delivered and published in 1798, 'there is not a nation on the habitable globe which has advanced in cultivation and commerce, in agriculture and in manufactures, with the same rapidity in the same period.'[2] Cooke, who was the chief official writer in favour of the Union, uses very similar language. 'What is meant,' he asked in a pamphlet which had great influence, 'by

[1] Crumpe's *Essay*, pp. 189, 201. Compare a remarkable passage in Lord Clare's *Speech*, Feb. 19, 1798, describing the condition of the southern and midland parts of the kingdom at the time when Ulster was convulsed by the reform agitation. 'During all the disturbances which prevailed in other parts of the kingdom, we were in a state of profound tranquillity and contentment there; the farmers had already tasted the sweets of sober industry; agriculture was increasing most rapidly, and the country wore the face of wealth and comfort and happiness; nay, more, the condition of the lowest order of the peasantry was ameliorated in a degree that I never flattered myself I should have lived to witness.' (P. 69.) See, too, on the growing prosperity, a pamphlet by one of the best English authorities on the condition of the poor—the Rev. J. Howlett, *On Population in Ireland* (1787).

[2] Lord Clare's *Speech*, p. 5.

a firm and steady administration? Does it mean such an administration as tends to the increase of the nation in population; its advancement in agriculture, in manufactures, in wealth, and prosperity? If that is intended, we have had the experience of it these twenty years; for it is universally admitted that no country in the world has made such rapid advances as Ireland has done in these respects.'[1]

Many similar passages might be adduced, but these will probably be deemed sufficient. Of the causes of this prosperity, two at least of the most important are sufficiently obvious, while others may give rise to considerable dispute. The abolition of the trade restrictions, by which Irish prosperity had been so long cramped and stunted, was at once followed by a great increase in nearly every branch of commerce, and especially in the Irish trade with the West Indies,[2] while the abolition of the more oppressive portions of the penal code brought back much capital which had been invested on the Continent, and caused Irish wealth, industry, and energy to flow freely in Irish channels. A few years of external and internal peace, light taxes,

[1] *Arguments for and against the Union Considered* (1798), pp. 28, 29. See, too, a very striking description of the progress of Ireland in the last years of the century, in a speech delivered by Grattan in 1810. *Speeches*, iv. 205–207.

[2] See some remarkable statistics collected in Grattan's *Life*, iii. 275. The import of sugar from the West Indies in 1781 was only 7,000 cwt. In 1784 it rose to 33,000 cwt. In the debate on the reduction of interest in 1788 the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that in 1703 the tonnage of shipping employed by Ireland was only 70,000 tons. At the time he spoke, it was more than 500,000 tons. In 1703 the exports of Ireland were 572,000. In 1788 they exceeded three millions. *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 278. If the reader desires to carry the comparison on, to a later date, he will find striking materials in Foster's speech on the Union delivered in April 1799, which is published separately (see especially pp. 104–109), and in Lord Clare's published speech in 1798.

and good national credit followed, and enabled the country to profit largely by these new advantages. In the opinion, however, of the best Irish writers and politicians of the eighteenth century, very much was also due to the great impulse which was given to agriculture by the corn bounties of 1784, and to the large parliamentary grants for carrying out public works and for instituting and encouraging different forms of manufacture. Of the corn bounties and the extreme importance that was attached to them I have already spoken. Whatever may be thought of them, there is at least, I think, no question that the great corn trade which had arisen in the last sixteen years of the century was an important element of Irish wealth; and it was mentioned in Parliament that about three years after the bounties on exportation had been granted, the exports of corn already attained the annual value of 400,000*l.*[1]

Large grants were also made for fisheries, canals, harbours, and other public works, and a system of bounties for encouraging particular manufactures was extensively pursued. This system is exceedingly alien to modern English notions; but in judging it, we must remember that it prevailed—though on a proportionately smaller scale—in England and in most other countries; that in Ireland it was originally a partial counterpoise or compensation for many unjust and artificial restrictions imposed on the different branches of native industry, and also that it was pursued in a country where the elements of spontaneous energy were incomparably weaker than in England. In my own opinion, English economical writers have usually generalised much too exclusively from the conditions of English life, and have greatly underrated the part

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 319.

which Government must play in industrial enterprises in countries where industry is still in its infancy; where capital has not been accumulated, and where industrial habits have not been formed. 'The infancy of our manufactures and the poverty of our people,' said Flood in one of his speeches in 1785, 'has forced us into a variety of bounties and encouragements, in order to give some spring to the languor of the nation. The Linen Board, the Dublin Society, parliamentary donations, directly or indirectly are made use of for this purpose. Our linen, woollen, silk, cotton, glass manufactures; in a word, almost everything respecting manufactures or husbandry receives some encouragement.' The writer whom I have already referred to as giving the fullest account of the economical condition of Ireland at this period, observes that 'the bounties on manufactures from the year 1783 to 1789 inclusive amounted to 115,000*l.* The sums granted in aid of manufactures, charities, and public works in four years ended in 1788, amounted to 290,057*l.* besides the annual grants to the trustees of the linen manufacture which were greater than before, and to the Dublin Society, &c.;' and he expresses his own opinion that these bounties, but more especially the bounty on the exportation of corn, had 'operated powerfully in rescuing Ireland from the state of poverty into which she had fallen.' He acknowledges that there was often much waste, jobbing, and dishonesty in the way in which they were applied; but adds that, while the public grants had considerably increased, such misapplications had in the latter days of the Irish Parliament undoubtedly diminished.[1]

The corn trade and the linen trade stood at the head of Irish industries, and while the first had almost

[1] Newenham, *View of Ireland*, pp. 205-207.

entirely arisen within the period we are examining, the latter had rapidly increased. In 1788 Foster observed that in the six preceding years the annual export of linen had risen from twenty to thirty millions of yards.[1] A number of other manufactures and industries were at the same time growing up. The silk manufacture underwent violent fluctuations, but it was stated in the Irish Parliament in 1784 that there were at that time no less than 1,400 silk looms at work in Dublin, employing 11,000 persons.[2] In a speech in 1785, Foster, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated in the Irish Parliament that formerly Ireland was accustomed annually to import new drapery to the amount of upwards of 300,000 yards, but that the importation had almost ceased, and the native manufacture had so developed that the exports of Irish drapery exceeded 650,000 yards a year.[3] The cotton manufacture was only introduced into Ireland after 1780, but in 1785 it was computed that it already employed nearly 30,000 people. In 1783, 4,000*l.* was granted by the Parliament for cotton machinery, and in the following year the Vice-Treasurer was directed to issue bills to the amount of 25,000*l.* to Captain Brooke for carrying that manufacture into the county of Kildare. His great manufacture at Prosperous in that county ultimately failed, but several other cotton manufactures were scattered over Ireland, and Irish printed cotton obtained a considerable reputation and is said to have been largely smuggled into England.[4] The glass manufacture, which had been crushed by the iniquitous English law of George II. forbidding the Irish to export their glass

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* viii. 319.

[2] Ibid. iii. 156; Sheffield *On the Trade of Ireland*, pp. 193–196; Newenham, *View of Ireland*, pp. 119, 120.

[3] Ibid. iv. 56, 57.

[4] Newenham, pp. 205, 208; Sheffield, pp. 196–208; Mullalla's *View of Irish Affairs*, ii. 131, 132.

to any country whatever, revived with reviving liberty. Lord Sheffield noticed in 1785 that nine glass houses had suddenly arisen, and that large quantities of Irish glass were already exported to America. It was boasted that the glass made at Waterford fully equalled the best article of English manufacture.[1] A hat and a carpet manufacture existed on a small but an increasing scale; Irish gloves and tabbinets were widely sought for, even on the Continent,[2] and from 1790 to 1792 the wealth of the country was very materially increased by the foundation or great extension of breweries of ale and porter. Cork was the chief centre, and they were warmly encouraged by the Irish Parliament not only on economical, but also on moral grounds, as counteracting that excessive use of spirituous liquors which was the great bane of Ireland. Newenham mentions the curious fact that at the close of the eighteenth century, in the province of Munster, the use of malt liquors greatly exceeded that of spirits.[3]

This picture of the condition of Ireland in the earlier years of its independent Parliament differs, I know, widely from an impression which is very general in England; but the more important facts on which I have formed my judgment have been fully stated, and those who desire to examine the subject in detail can easily follow the indications I have given. The true history of the Irish Parliament is not to be found in the fantastic pages of Barrington, and still less in the dishonest pictures of modern partisans. It is to be found in the

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[1] Sheffield, pp. 237–240; Newenham, p. 105.

[2] Newenham, p. 208. See also a very interesting and detailed review of the different industries in Ireland, in a speech by Ogilvie on the commercial treaty with France. *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 272–282.

[3] Newenham, pp. 224, 225. Many particulars about Irish breweries and spirit-drinking, will be found in the debates of 1791. *Irish Parl. Deb.* vol. xi.

excellent reports of its debates; in the Irish statute book, which contains the nett results of its work; in the volumes of those contemporary writers who have most fully examined the industrial and economical conditions of Ireland under its rule. The character of this body I have tried to draw with a steady and an impartial hand, both in its lights and in its shades, and I am conscious that the task is both a difficult and a thankless one, at a time when the whole subject is generally looked upon under the distorting influences of modern politics.

To an historian of the eighteenth century, however, few things can be more grotesquely absurd than to suppose that the merits or demerits, the failure or the success, of the old Irish Parliament has any real bearing on modern schemes for reconstructing the government of Ireland on a revolutionary and Jacobin basis; entrusting the protection of property and the maintenance of law to some democratic assembly consisting mainly of Fenians and Land-leaguers, of paid agitators and of penniless adventurers. The parliamentary system of the eighteenth century might be represented in very different lights by its enemies and by its friends. Its enemies would describe it as essentially government carried on through the instrumentality of a corrupt oligarchy, of a large, compact body of members holding places and pensions at the pleasure of the Government, and removed by the system of rotten boroughs from all effectual popular control. Its friends would describe it as essentially the government of Ireland by the gentlemen of Ireland, and especially by its landlord class.

Neither representation would be altogether true, but each contains a large measure of truth. The nature of the Irish constituencies and the presence in the House of Commons of a body of pensioners and placemen forming considerably more than a third of the whole assembly, and

nearly half of its active members, gave the Government a power which, except under very rare and extraordinary circumstances, must, if fully exerted, have been overwhelming. The system of corruption was largely extended after the Regency controversy, and it produced evils that it is difficult to overrate. It enabled a small oligarchy to resist the most earnest and most legitimate demands of Irish opinion, and as Grattan vainly predicted it taught the people to look elsewhere for their representatives, and exposed them to the fatal contagion of the revolutionary spirit that was then circulating through Europe. On the other hand, the Irish Parliament was a body consisting very largely of independent country gentlemen, who on nearly all questions affecting the economical and industrial development of the country, had a powerful if not a decisive influence. The lines of party were but faintly drawn. Most questions were settled by mutual compromise or general concurrence, and it was in reality only in a small class of political questions that the corrupt power of Government seems to have been strained. The Irish House of Commons consisted mainly of the class of men who now form the Irish grand juries. It comprised the flower of the landlord class. It was essentially and pre-eminently the representative of the property of the country. It had all the instincts and the prejudices, but also all the qualities and the capacities, of an educated propertied class, and it brought great local knowledge and experience to its task. Most of its work was of that practical and unobtrusive character which leaves no trace in history. Several useful laws were made to rectify the scandalous abuses of Irish prisons; to improve the condition of insolvent debtors; to prevent burials in churches; to establish hospitals and infirmaries; to check different kinds of disorder as they arose; to make harbours and canals; to encourage local institutions

and industries; and except during the conflict on the Regency question, the parliamentary machine had hitherto moved on with very little friction or disturbance.

Of the large amount of ability which it comprised there can be no reasonable question, and this ability was by no means confined to the independent section. Several very able men accepted the general system of government, as, on the whole, the best suited for the circumstances of the country. Ireland has seldom or never produced, in the province of politics, men of wider knowledge and more solid ability than John Foster and Hely Hutchinson, while Fitzgibbon, Langrishe, and Parnell were all men of much more than ordinary talents. All of these were during the greater part of their lives connected with the Government.

The system of government indeed, though corrupt, anomalous, and exposed to many dangers, was not one of those which are incompatible with a large measure of national prosperity. There were unfair monopolies of patronage; there was a pension list of rather more than 100,000*l.* a year, a great part of which was grossly corrupt; there was a scandalous multiplication and a scandalous employment of sinecures; but these are not the kind of evils that seriously affect the material well-being of the great mass of the community. In spite of much corrupt expenditure the Government was a cheap one;[1] Ireland was among the most lightly taxed nations in Europe, and with the exception of the tithe system, which was unjust in the exemption of pasture, and which in some parts of the country fell with a most

[1] George Ponsonby once said: 'The expense of the monarchical part of our Constitution is less in Ireland than in any country in Europe. In England the civil list is one million annually; in Ireland the expense of the monarchical part of the Constitution is about forty thousand pounds.' *Irish Parl. Deb.* vi. 287.

oppressive weight upon the poor, there was little to complain of in the apportionment of public burdens. In France, and over the greater part of the continent of Europe, the poor were at this time crushed by special and iniquitous taxation, from which the rich were exempt, and by an immense mass of feudal burdens and restrictions. There was nothing of this kind in later Irish legislation. The only direct tax which was paid by the poor was hearth money, at the rate of two shillings a hearth, and a few years before the Union, cabins with only one hearth were exempted.[1] There was, it is true, no legal provision, as in England, for the poor, but the evils of the English poor law were so great that this was rather an advantage than the reverse, and the Irish Parliament was accustomed to make large grants for the support of charitable institutions, and, in times of distress, even for the direct relief of the sufferers. All those portions of the penal code against Catholics which oppressed the poor in their religion or their industry had either been repealed or had become completely obsolete.

The real obstacles to material prosperity were now much more moral than political. They were to be found in vices of thought and character which, if the present book be truly written, are largely explicable by the past conditions of the nation, which had deepened and intensified through many disastrous centuries, but which seemed now at last to be slowly and partially diminishing. Recklessness, improvidence, a contempt for labour and economy, a low standard of public duty among the higher orders; idleness, turbulence, ignorance, drunkenness, and an extreme proneness to crimes of violence and combination among the poor; a want in

[1] This was a favourite object of Doyle, Conolly, and Grattan. See *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 222, viii. 397–406.

all classes of seriousness, self-reliance, enterprise, and respect for law, were the real obstacles to Irish prosperity. Though a few branches of trade were still closed, the legislation of 1779 and of 1782, and the free admission which England had granted to Irish linen, furnished a field of enterprise which was more than adequate to the resources and industry of Ireland. Her position was essentially different from that of Scotland at the time when Scotland purchased the commercial freedom which was indispensable to her well-being, at the price of a legislative union, and in this difference we may find a clue to a great part of the difference in the subsequent history of the two nations.

Nor was it merely in material prosperity that the signs of improvement were visible. Intellectual activity in the last forty years of the eighteenth century perceptibly increased, and it was assuming more and more a national cast. The writings of Charles O'Connor, Ledwich, Vallancey, and Mervyn Archdall invested the earlier period of Irish history with a new interest, and the Irish Academy, which was incorporated in the beginning of 1786 under the presidency of Lord Charlemont, gave a great impulse to serious and unsectarian scholarship. I have already noticed the important contributions which were made to a better knowledge of the rebellion of 1641; and the 'History of Ireland' by Leland, one of the Fellows of Trinity College, which was published in 1773, though monotonous and colourless in style, and often superficial in research, acquired and still maintains the position of a standard work. Another Irish history, written in the form of letters and dedicated to Lord Charlemont, was published in 1788 by William Crawford, one of the chaplains of the volunteers. It has little historical value except where it relates contemporary events in Ulster, but like the later history of Gordon, it has a great interest to the student

of Irish opinion, as showing with what a complete absence of religious prejudice and animosity, it was possible for an Irish clergyman, at the close of the eighteenth century, to describe the periods of Irish history in which religious passions had been most furiously aroused.

The decadence of sectarian bigotry was, indeed, one of the happiest features of the time. Ireland, like all other countries, experienced the intellectual influences which were everywhere lowering the theological temperature, and diminishing the prominence of dogma in religious teaching; and the new national interests which had arisen had done much to turn the thoughts and passions of men into secular channels. By far the most brilliant and popular writer on the Catholic side was Arthur O'Leary; his devotion to his creed was incontestable, but it would be hardly possible to find a writer of his profession who exhibits its distinctive doctrines in a more subdued and attenuated form, and no one appears to have found anything strange or equivocal in the curiously characteristic sentence in which Grattan described his merits. 'If I did not know him to be a Christian clergyman, I should suppose him by his writings to be a philosopher of the Augustan age.' The case of Dean Kirwan is even more striking. This very remarkable man, whose powers of pulpit oratory seem to have been not inferior to those of Whitefield, and whose eloquence was coupled by Barrington with that of Curran and Sheridan, was a member of an old Catholic family in Galway. He was educated by the Jesuits at St. Omer, where he was accustomed to say 'he had imbibed the noble ambition of benefiting mankind.' He took priest's orders, became professor of natural and moral philosophy in the University of Louvain, and afterwards chaplain to the Neapolitan ambassador in London; but in 1787 he conformed to

the Established Church in Dublin, and became by far the greatest of Irish preachers.

In the present century it is almost certain that a man who had passed through such a change would have made the differences between his former and his latter creed one of the chief subjects of his preaching; but Kirwan through his whole career resolutely refused to touch upon any points of controversy. He mainly justified his adhesion to the Established Church on the ground that it gave him a larger sphere for that practical usefulness which he conceived to be the highest aim of a Christian minister, and he made it his special mission to allay religious animosity, to preach the tenets of a pure and perfectly unsectarian morality, and especially to plead the cause of the suffering and of the poor.[1] Extempore preaching at the time when he appeared was very rare in the Irish Church,[2] and the power which the passionate eloquence of Kirwan exercised over vast congregations is all the more wonderful because he never adopted any of those startling tenets

[1] In a letter which he wrote just after his change, the following characteristic passage occurs: 'On Sunday next I am to preach at St. Peter's, and for the first time in a Protestant place of worship. But though I have changed the sphere of my exertions, they shall still, under God, be invariably directed to the same object—to improve the human heart; to enlarge and enlighten the understanding of men; banish religious prejudices, and diffuse through society the great blessings of peace, order, and mutual affection. . . . If I have passed to the Church Establishment, I have only passed into a situation in which I can better accomplish a desire which has ever been the next and dearest to my heart—that of rendering more service to the community, and inculcating the pure morality of the Gospel with greater fruit and extent. Upon the clearest reflection, I envisage Christianity in a great measure as a practical institution of religion, designed by Christ to regulate the dispositions and improve the character of men.' See the Life of Kirwan in the *Remains of Samuel O'Sullivan*, ii. 196, 197.

[2] Two preachers named Lefanu and Harrison had begun this custom as early as 1780. *Anthologia Hibernica*, ii. 123.

which formed the staple of the Methodist preaching. The collections for the poor in his church arose at once to four or five times their usual amount. On one occasion 1,500*l.* was collected for the Meath Hospital. Watches, jewels, and bracelets were often flung in fits of uncontrollable enthusiasm into the plate. It was found necessary to protect the entrance of the churches where he preached from the overwhelming throng, by guards and palisades, and the governors of all the day schools in Dublin agreed in a resolution expressive of the great national advantages that had arisen from the charity which he evoked, and calling on the vestries 'to consider the most effectual method to secure to this city an instrument under Providence of so much public benefit.'

His character seems to have been at once singularly pure, disinterested, and benevolent, and his warm friendship with Grattan and his firm attachment to Whig principles for a long time shut him out from the favours of the Government. Four hundred pounds a year was the highest ecclesiastical income he possessed till 1800, when Lord Cornwallis bestowed on him the small Deanery of Killala, though he had been recognised for thirteen years as incomparably the foremost man in the Irish Church. It was not for such men or for such services that the overgrown prizes of that Church were reserved, and Lord Westmorland in offering him a small living of about 200*l.* a year wrote very frankly: 'It is far, far below your merits; but Government must reserve its high rewards for the services of its friends.' Grattan in 1792 paid a noble tribute in Parliament to the great preacher. 'This man,' he said, 'preferred our country and our religion, and brought to both genius superior to what he found in either. He called forth the latent virtue of the human heart and taught men to discover in themselves a mine of charity of which the

proprietors had been unconscious. In feeding the lamp of charity he has almost exhausted the lamp of life. He came to interrupt the repose of the pulpit, and shakes one world with the thunder of the other. The preacher's desk becomes the throne of light. Around him a train, not such as crouch and swagger at the levée of princes, not such as attend the procession of the Viceroy, horse, foot, and dragoons, but that wherewith a great genius peoples his own state—charity in ecstasy and vice in humiliation—vanity, arrogance, and saucy empty pride appalled by the rebuke of the preacher, and cheated for a moment of their native improbity and insolence. What reward? St. Nicholas within or St. Nicholas without. The curse of Swift is upon him, to have been born an Irishman and a man of genius and to have used it for the good of his country.'[1]

A career like that of Kirwan would have been scarcely possible in Ireland in the theological atmosphere of the succeeding generation, and the liberality both of O'Leary and of Kirwan has appeared to their clerical biographers to be a matter requiring not a little apology. It is related of Law, who was appointed Bishop of Killala in 1787, that finding the population of his diocese almost exclusively Catholic, he distributed among them some of the best works of their own divines, declaring that as he could not make them good Protestants he would at least try to make them good Roman Catholics.[2] The undoubted fact that the most active advocates for giving votes to Catholics were

[1] See the sketch of the Life of Kirwan prefixed to his sermons; the admirable biography of him in the *Remains of the Rev. S. O'Sullivan*; Barrington's *Personal Sketches; Anthologia Hibernica*, i. 414–417. Croker fully corroborates the accounts of Kirwan's marvellous power, and he places him as an orator in the same rank with Pitt, Canning, and Curran. *Croker Papers*, iii. 216, 217.

[2] Mant's *History of the Church of Ireland*, ii. 685.

found at Belfast, and belonged to those dissenting bodies which were theologically most opposed to Catholicism, is a clear proof that politics had begun to dominate over theology. The volunteers in the latter part of their career, without hesitation or concealment, enrolled Catholics in their ranks,[1] and the party which desired to concede to them political power continued to increase. 'The right of being elected,' wrote Lord Sheffield in 1785, 'would surely follow their being eligible, but at all events the power would be in the electors. It is curious to observe one-fifth or perhaps one-sixth of a nation in possession of the power and property of the country, eager to communicate that power to the remaining four-fifths, which would in effect entirely transfer it from themselves.'[2]

It would, however, be easy to exaggerate the extent of the change. The elements of turbulence in the country were very numerous, and little provocation was needed to fan them into a flame. The contests between the Peep of Day Boys and the Defenders in Ulster are said to have originated in a private quarrel

[1] 'The Papist with an Orange cockade fires in honour of King William's birthday. He goes to a Protestant church and hears a charity sermon. . . . To permit the use of arms to all Catholics would have been madness. To confine it to men of a certain property was a project full of difficulty and of offence. . . . We wished for some mode of judging, which applied not to property only, but to fitness and to character, by which a worthy Roman Catholic might, and such a one only, be trusted with the use of arms and attached to his Protestant fellow-subjects. Volunteering has done what law could not do. The Catholic who wishes to carry arms proposes himself to a Protestant corps. His character is tried by his neighbours. He is admitted to an honour and a privilege; he receives a reward for his good conduct. . . . Thus are the best of the Catholic body happily selected, the whole of the Catholic body satisfied, and the two religions marvellously united.' *Thoughts on the Volunteers* (1784), pp. 20, 21.

[2] Sheffield's *Observations on the Trade of Ireland*, p. 865

unconnected with religion, but they speedily assumed the character of a religious war. The former, who were exclusively Protestants and mainly Presbyterians, professed a determination to enforce the law disarming Papists, and they were accustomed to enter their cottages in early morning to search for and to seize arms. The Defenders were exclusively Catholics, and were professedly, as their name imports, a purely defensive body. In truth, however, both sides were animated by a furious hatred, and both sides committed many acts of violence and aggression. The disturbances appear to have begun in 1785, but they continued for several years, and the Peep of Days ultimately merged into Orangemen, and the Defenders into United Irishmen. Bodies of several hundreds of men of the lowest class on more than one occasion came into collision: several lives were lost; a reign of terror prevailed in large districts of Ulster, and it led to a new enrolment of Protestant volunteers to maintain the peace.[1] In Munster the Whiteboy outrages were certainly not of a religious origin, but they were directed mainly, though not exclusively, against the payment of tithes, and they appear to have been not unfrequently organised in Catholic chapels.

As the party strengthened which demanded Catholic

[1] Plowden's *Historical Register*, ii. 200-202. Several letters on the subject, representing the blame as attaching chiefly to the Catholics, will be found in the *Charlemont Correspondence* (MSS.). Among them is a very honourable one from Fitzgibbon asking advice from Lord Charlemont about a report from Armagh that 500 Catholics were in arms, and that soldiers must be sent down. 'Of all expedients,' the Chancellor said, 'that of military force is the last that ought to be resorted to.' (Fitzgibbon to Charlemont, July 16, 1789.) In the Irish State Paper Office there is a curious letter from Newry (July 17, 1789), giving a detailed and very graphic picture of the terrorism which 'a mob of Presbyterians under the name of "Break of Day Boys," were exercising over the poor Catholics of that district.'

emancipation, the rival interests and animosities were called more prominently into the conflict, but the motives in action were usually much more political than theological. The effects of a great transfer of political influence; the insecurity it would give to property which rested largely on the Act of Settlement; the danger of calling into power masses of utterly ignorant men, were the topics chiefly dilated upon. National education had not yet been undertaken by the Parliaments either of England or Ireland as a serious duty, and the Charter Schools, which were still liberally supported, scarcely cast a perceptible ray of light on the dense mass of Catholic ignorance. In Trinity College, it is true, Catholics of the higher and middle orders were already admitted by connivance, though they could not yet obtain degrees or honours,[1] but there was no provision for the poor. The endowments of the great schools could be of no use to them. The parochial schools, which in England did something for popular education, were the products of a wealthy establishment, and no such schools existed or could exist among the Irish Catholics. For generations their education had been proscribed by law, and when the laws were repealed, the poverty of priests and people, the absence of educational institutions and endowments, and the habits contracted during the penal laws were insuperable obstacles. The great mass of the Irish Catholics were either absolutely illiterate, or were left to the slight, uncertain, and often perverting teaching of the hedge schoolmaster.[2]

In 1787, indeed, an extremely comprehensive sys-

[1] See pp. 280, 281. Also the statement of Wolfe Tone in his *Life and Works* (American edition), i. 355.

[2] The strongest statement I know of the extent to which Catholic schools multiplied in the last years of the century will be found in Newenham, *State of Ireland*, pp. 13, 19.

tem of national education was introduced, in the form of resolutions, into the Irish Parliament by Orde, the Chief Secretary of the Duke of Rutland. A long obsolete statute of Henry VIII. had enjoined the erection of a school in every parish in Ireland, and this measure Orde proposed to revive. He also desired to establish four large schools of a higher kind, imitated from the Bluecoat School in Dublin and Christ's Hospital in London, and two others especially charged with preparing boys for the University; to reform the diocesan schools, and ultimately to found a second University, and to levy from different sources considerable sums in support of these institutions.[1] The resolution relating to the establishment of a new University, was opposed by a single member, and the other resolutions introduced by Orde passed unanimously through the House of Commons.[2] But no step was taken for

[1] *Irish Parl. Deb.* vii. 511. In a remarkable pamphlet, called *The Choice of Evils, or, Which is best for the Kingdom of Ireland; the Commercial Propositions or a Legislative Union*, published in Dublin in 1787, there is a powerful appeal in favour of the establishment of a second college attached to the University of Dublin, and admitting members of all religious denominations; and also for the admission of Catholics to degrees in Trinity College. The writer says: 'How necessary it is that something effectual should be done is manifest from the efforts which both the North and South are at present making for the education of youth. Witness the Academies of Belfast, Strabane, and Carlow. These are pushed forward by private undertakers as the spontaneous vegetation of the soil. . . . Consistency requires that the Roman Catholics should not be denied seminaries for their education. We have so far relaxed the penal laws as to suffer them to acquire a permanence in their property. It would be absurd to refuse them the power of improving their minds as well as their fortunes.' 'We have not done enough so long as the clause in one of the Acts of 1782, disallowing the erection or endowment of any Popish university or college, remains unrepealed. . . . It would, however, be the greatest solecism that ever was thought of in politics, to give them [Catholics] either votes in Parliament or liberty to carry arms.'

[2] The very interesting debates on this subject will be found in vol. vii. of the *Irish Parl. Deb.*

carrying them into effect. The death of the Duke of Rutland, in October 1787, led to the recall of Orde, and his project, which was certainly not among the least memorable incidents in Irish parliamentary history, has been scarcely noticed by Irish historians.

Legislation on such subjects occupies but a small place in the statute book either of England or Ireland during the eighteenth century. On the other hand, many forms of private industry were encouraged, and some real efforts were made to spread industry and order over those portions of the island which were still in a condition of almost absolute anarchy. In these tasks the Irish Parliament, with all its shortcomings, does not appear to me to have seriously failed. Nor was it from the presence and proceedings of this body that serious danger to the Empire was to be feared. It was rather from the formation beyond its walls of a great force of opinion and of agitation which it could neither represent nor control. The country was awakening to a keen consciousness of its political existence; and it was inevitable, if the peace of Ireland was to be maintained, that something should be done to make the Irish Parliament a really representative body, and to put an end to the system of monopoly and corruption which ran through every pore of the Irish Administration. Sooner or later this problem must inevitably have been faced; and the sudden impulse which the French Revolution had given to the democratic spirit in Europe forced it on, at a time when the system

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The Presbyterians at this time petitioned for the endowment of a Presbyterian college; but Hely Hutchinson, who took a leading part in these discussions, expressed a decided opinion against separate places of education for different religious persuasions, and urged the great importance of admitting members of all creeds to the full privileges of the University. He mentioned that many Dissenters were at Trinity College. Hutchinson was still Provost of Trinity College as well as Secretary of State.

of corruption was at its height, and when the Irish Administration was in the hands of bitter enemies of reform. On the capital question of granting the suffrage to the Catholics, the ministers in England, as we shall hereafter see, were in favour of concession, while the Administration in Ireland was bitterly opposed to it; and the result was a vacillation and division of policy in a critical and dangerous period, which led to consequences most fatal to the prosperity of Ireland.

The problem before the Irish Parliament would, under the most favourable circumstances, have been an extremely difficult one, and most analogies drawn from purely English experience, and especially from later English experience, only tend to mislead. The goodness of laws and political institutions is essentially relative, depending upon their adaptation to the character, circumstances, wants and traditions of the people for whom they are intended; and in all these respects, England and Ireland were wholly different. There is no greater delusion than to suppose that the same degree of popular government can be wisely accorded to nations in all stages of development, and that a country in a backward stage is really benefited by a servile imitation of the institutions of its more advanced neighbours. A country where the traditions of many peaceful centuries have knitted the various elements of national being into a happy unity, where there is no disaffection to the Crown or the Government, where the relations of classes are normal and healthy, where the influence of property is unbroken, and where those who are incapable of judging for themselves find natural leaders of character and intelligence everywhere at their head, can easily bear an amount of democracy which must bring utter ruin upon a country torn by sedition, religious animosities, and agrarian war, and in which all the natural ligatures of society have been weakened

or disjointed. An amount of democracy which in one country leaves the main direction of affairs in the hands of property and intelligence, in another country virtually disfranchises both, and transfers all controlling authority to an ignorant and excitable peasantry, guided and duped by demagogues, place-hunters, and knaves. A system of criminal law and of criminal procedure which is admirably adapted for a country where crime is nothing more than the outbreak of isolated bad passions, and where every man's hand is against the criminal, must fail to fulfil the first purposes of justice, if it is applied without modification to a country where large classes of crime are commonly looked upon as acts of war, where jurymen will acquit in the face of the clearest evidence, and where known criminals may live in security under the shelter of popular connivance or popular intimidation. In a rich country, in which many generations of uninterrupted prosperity have raised the industrial spirit to the highest point, in which energy and self-reliance are almost redundantly displayed, and in which the middle class is the strongest power in the State, nearly all industrial enterprises may be safely left to the unassisted action of private individuals. It is not so in a very poor country, where the middle class is small and feeble, and where a long train of depressing circumstances have reduced the industrial spirit to the lowest ebb. Perhaps, the worst consequence of the legislative union has been the tendency it produces to measure Irish legislation by English wants and experience, and to force Ireland into a plane of democracy for which it is wholly unfitted. Very different conditions require very different types of administration, and, in Ireland, the elements of self-government lie, and always have lain, within a higher plane and a more restricted circle than in England, and the relations of classes and the conditions

of opinion are incomparably less favourable to popular institutions. A stronger and firmer executive, a more restricted suffrage, a greater concentration of power, a more constant intervention of Government both in the way of assistance and initiative, and in the way of restriction and control, is imperatively required.

These essential conditions of Irish politics do not appear to me to have been unrecognised by the statesmen of the Irish Parliament, but they had two great and difficult tasks to fulfil, and the permanence of the Irish Constitution depended mainly upon the question whether in the next few years these tasks could be successfully accomplished. It was necessary to withdraw the direction of affairs from a corrupt but intelligent aristocracy without throwing it into the hands of demagogues and rebels, and it was no less necessary to take some serious step to put an end to the vicious system of religious ascendency without destroying the healthy and indispensable ascendency of property and intelligence.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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